

THE NAZARENE

Studies in New Testament Exegesis

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CHAPTER I

Semitic Expressions in the New Testament

THE earliest explicit mention of the composition of the Gospels is given by Papias (95–165), the bishop of Hieropolis in Phrygia, the last disciple of John the Apostle.¹ He writes that the book of Mark records many of Christ's words and actions, and adds that Matthew also reports the "sayings" of the Lord.

The term *logia* may therefore be understood in its most comprehensive meaning, i.e., it refers to the sayings and the doings. Mark, Papias continues, did not hear the Lord nor was he a disciple of the Lord, but he later accompanied St. Peter in his apostolic mission; "consequently Mark lacked nothing because he wrote things as he remembered them; his one care was to omit nothing of what he heard, to be veracious in everything." With regard to Matthew, Papias also says that apostle got ready (or wrote) the speeches, and every man translated them to the best of his ability.²

According to Papias, St. Irenaeus (d. 202), Origen (185–

¹ For Papias, see Gerhard Rauschen (ed. Berthold Altaner), *Patrologie* (Freiburg i. B., 1931), pp. 66 ff.

² Hildebrandus Höpfl (ed. Benno Gut), *Introductio specialis in Novum Testamentum (Introductionis in sacros utriusque Testimenti libros compendium, Vol. III)*, Rome, 1938, pp. 30 ff.; cf. Max Meinertz, *Einleitung in das Neue Test.*, Paderborn, 1933, pp. 180 ff.

282), Eusebius (d. 340), and St. Jerome (c. 340-420), Matthew wrote his Gospel in "Hebrew," that is, Aramaic, an opinion also held by St. John Chrysostom (d. 407), St. Cyril of Jerusalem (d. 386), St. Epiphanius (d. 403), and St. Ephraim (d. 373). Others also considered Aramaic the original language of the Gospel of St. Matthew. The use of a series of expressions presupposing a good knowledge of the language, the ways and customs of the Hebrews, and the topography of Palestine confirms the view that the writer of the Gospel is addressing himself to Jews and is himself steeped in rabbinical literature.³ In the characteristic words used by St. Matthew, "*nullum est cui non respondeat vocabulum hebraicum.*"⁴ In many places the style is not Greek, but Semitic.⁵

Among non-Catholics opinions differ about the original language of the other Gospels. Thus Meinertz⁶ regards the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles as Greek books. Matthew is based on an Aramaic text; but this fact does not alter the Greek character of the books. Many idioms appear Semitic but are in reality vulgar Greek. Nascent Christianity creates but a limited number of new words, and the conceptual result remains unchanged. Grandmaison is of a very different opinion. He says: "Only amateurs can still question the basic Semitism of our Gospels, including the fourth."⁷ On the other hand, Alberto Vaccari says: "The whole New Testament is written in Greek; only the Gospel of Matthew, according to the testimony of the ancients, had a first edition in Aramaic, which

³ Paulus Gaechter, *Summa introductionis in Novum Test.* (Leipzig, 1938), p. 56: *homo potius litteris more fere rabbinorum imbutus.*

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 32.

⁷ Léonce de Grandmaison, *Jésus-Christ* (1929), II, 662.

was, however, lost and left no trace. Its place for us is taken by the translation or the recasting of it in Greek."⁸

As for the Gospel of St. Mark, one must add to the information given by Papias, mentioned above, that of St. Irenaeus, who states that St. Mark wrote everything that he had learnt from St. Peter's teaching in Rome regarding the words and deeds of the Redeemer. Justin Martyr (d. c. 165) calls St. Mark's Gospel the memoirs of St. Peter. The qualification given to Mark of interpreter of Peter must be taken, not in the sense that he first translated orally the Aramaic preaching of the Prince of the Apostles, who though knowing no Greek spent his missionary labors among Greek-speaking peoples, but in the sense that by his Gospel he made it possible to give the sacred text to a wider public in his own days as well as to posterity.⁹ He does not address himself to Jews; he does not refer to the laws, and quotes but one text of the Prophets. He does not assume in his readers any knowledge of the geography of Palestine, of the ways and customs of the Jews; his Greek is not free from Latin turns. Roman coins take the place of Greek coins.¹⁰ Yet Mark was conversant with one Semitic language, and his Gospel is not without Semitic forms of expression; these, however, are neither so numerous nor of such a nature as to make of his Gospel a translation from a Semitic text.¹¹

St. Luke, a physician and the companion of St. Paul in his missionary journeys, lived in Rome after the Apostle's

⁸ *La Sacra Bibbia*, translated . . . with notes under the auspices of the Pontifical Biblical Institute, Vol. I, *Il Pentateuco* (Florence, Salani, 1943), p. 8.

⁹ Josef Schmid, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (Regensburg, 1938), p. 7; Höpfl, *op. cit.*, pp. 66 ff.

¹⁰ Louis Pirot, *Les Saints Evangiles, S. Matthieu, S. Marc* (*La Sainte Bible*, Vol. IX, Paris, 1935), p. 394.

¹¹ Gaechter, *op. cit.*, p. 69; Gut, *op. cit.*, p. 72.

death. The style of his Greek is elegant. In it we find Hebrew forms of expression,¹² especially in the first chapters.

Dalman,¹³ who has brought to the linguistic problem of the Gospels decades of research and philological competence in Greek as well as in Aramaic, assumes the existence of a Semitic text. But he declares that we cannot easily adduce true and proper proofs of an Aramaic, not Hebrew, original text of the Synoptics. However, the double meaning of "holy thing" and "jewels" (Matt. 7:6) contained in the one word must have come from the Aramaic *qud-shajja*: Hebrew or Greek derivations are definitely out of place, because neither *qedoshim* nor *āyia* can admit of these two meanings. This *λογίον* at least is therefore based on the Aramaic text of words as pronounced by Jesus.

According to Bonaccorsi, "the New Testament was written in Greek; however, not by Greeks (except Luke), but by Jews. The earliest were Jews of Palestine, whose mother tongue was Aramaic. But all of them had their ears tuned by lifelong habit to the Greek of the Septuagint, usually following slavishly the Hebrew text. Moreover, for nearly all of them the Septuagint translation was the only book they had read. And since they did not write out of their inner selves, but reproduced thoughts already expressed and passed on in Semitic, they were bound to Semitic sources."¹⁴ From these considerations of Bonaccorsi, we come to the idea that the Evangelists of the New Testament, even if only for their own use and in Greek,

¹² Gut, *op. cit.*, p. 100; Gaechter, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

¹³ Gustaf Dalman, *Jesus-Jeschua. Die drei Sprachen Jesu, Jesus in der Synagoge, auf dem Berge, beim Passahmahl, am Kreuz* (Leipzig, 1922), p. 50.

¹⁴ Giuseppe Bonaccorsi, *Primi saggi di filologia neutestamentaria*, Turin, 1933, I, lxxvi-xci.

must have had Semitic sources on which to work, or more precisely, according to Bonaccorsi, Aramaic sources.

Vannutelli¹⁵ prefers to assume a Hebrew text. After a thorough study of the Synoptics, comparing them with the Greek translations of the Old Testament (the Septuagint, Theodosius, Aquila, Symmacus), he was led to notice that among these various Greek versions of the Old Testament there were the same concordances and the same divergencies that are met with in parallel passages of the Synoptics. From this observation he deduced "that our Synoptics, in the parts they have in common, derive from one Hebrew text, just as did the old Greek translations when rendering the same passage of the Old Testament."

Hence wherever, e.g., in Matthew or in some other passage of the Gospels, a Semitic text can be accepted as the original, is this Semitic text Hebrew or Aramaic?

We have mentioned above the double meaning of *qud-shajja* ("holy things" and "jewels"). In the same way we could refer to the play on words in "end" (*sefa*) and "sword" (*safja*) in the episode¹⁶ of the two swords. Here, too, without doubt, is a case of reflex from an Aramaic expression.

The *Sentences of the Fathers* (Abot) are written in Hebrew, even if it is a higher Hebrew. In I, 12-13, there are two passages of Hillel, one in Hebrew, the other in Aramaic. The one in Aramaic is based on a play on words or, better still, on more than one case of a play on words. Hence we incline to the view that the basic type of the Gospels may

¹⁵ Primo Vannutelli, "Les évangiles synoptiques," *Revue biblique*, XXXIV (1925), 32.

¹⁶ Luke 22:35 ff.

have related the events in Hebrew, quoting the spoken words in Aramaic. This for two reasons, both praiseworthy: the first that, spoken and heard in Aramaic, the sayings were to be preserved in their original language; the second that, when translated all reconstructions lose their original grace.¹⁷ The exposition of events in Hebrew was but in keeping with the Old Testament tradition, where historical events are expressed in the sacred language.

¹⁷ With reference to the Aramaic words given in the original language, Aramaic, in the Gospels, Salvatore Garofalo has noted some convincing items. They are expressions uttered by Jesus on given occasions with great emphasis. Thus *talitha qūmī* (Mark 5:41), *effeta* or *ippatah* or *eppatah* (*ibid.*, 7:34), *ell*, *ell* (*ibid.*, 15:32; Matt. 7:46), *abbā* (Mark 14:36). In the case of *raqa* (*rēqā*) we are probably dealing with an untranslatable word, similar to "boche" in French. We must remember the interesting findings about the Semitic substratum in the text of Luke 1:5; 2:56, by Garofalo in his work, *Le parole di Maria* (Rome, 1945), pp. 23 ff.

Torrey thinks the Gospels were already put together before 60 and that Matthew, Mark, and John were originally written in Aramaic. According to Lattman the *Pater Noster* was composed by Jesus in Aramaic. Luke translates literally the Aramaic text which he has before him. That is why Luke, who was a Greek, "preserves for us the primitive tenor of his Semitic sources more purely and more faithfully than the other Evangelists of Jewish origin." See Karl Adam, *Gesù il Cristo*, tr. by De Ambroggi (Brescia, 1944), pp. 66-68.

CHAPTER II

The Nazarene

"Never did man speak like this man."

John 7:46

THE Latin form of "Nazarene" is "Nazarenus." In the Greek text we find several alternatives: *Ναζαρηνός*, *Ναζαραῖος*, and *Ναζαρέος*. The Arabs call Christians *naṣārī*, and also *naṣrāni*. The Syriac translation of the Bible has *naṣrājā*.¹ The Talmudic rendering is *nōṣērī*.

The epithet "Nazarene" is considered already in the Gospel of St. Matthew² as being derived from the name of the city of Nazareth. The name of the city is given in Greek in the forms *Ναζαρέθ* and *Ναζαρέτ*. Besides this, though much more rarely, we find also the form *Ναζαρά* which is considered a plural. The *Evangeliarium Hierosolymitanum* gives the name *Neṣoret*; the Peshita has *Nasrat*. The oldest known Hebrew transcription, which is, however, but of the seventh century,³ confirms the content of the consonants *nṣrt* (*h*), but as for the vowels it leaves the way open to various hypotheses. Furthermore, this piece of information does not offer much guaranty, because the

¹ Meyer, *Ursprung*, II, 424. The Arabic *naṣārā* for Christians (sing. *naṣrāni*) is considered as deriving from the Syriac *naṣrājā*.

² Matt. 2:23.

³ Klein, *Ortsnamen*, p. 202.

transcription is of a late date and also because it is found in a poetic text, in the well-known synagogue poem of Eliezer Ha-Qalir. Generally, however, it is supposed that the Hebrew name of the place was *Nesareth*. S. Kraus, basing himself on J. Halévy, believes that the name *Neṣareth* is to be explained by *nesareth*, from the word *nesarîm*, which means carpenter's chips. At the same time, however, he supposes that the town was called *Naṣran*, from the word *bē nṣrnj*, which is found once only in the Talmud⁴ and which he thinks ought to be read *bē nṣrnj* (*bē naṣrānī*), to which he attributes the rendering: from *Naṣrān*, that is, from Nazareth.⁵

The town is not mentioned either in the Egyptian lists of Palestinian and Syriac place names compiled by Jirku⁶ or in the Bible or in Talmudic literature or in Josephus Flavius or in the Gentile literature of the time of Christ. From this the so-called mythologists have thought to score a point in support of their thesis, according to which Christ was a myth, the city of Nazareth did not exist in His days, and the word "Nazarene" refers to the name of some god. These ideas are today, however, so antiquated that we have no need to spend time in combating them. Yet the fact that the name of the city of Nazareth does not occur in the wide range of literature already cited may well give food for thought.

But here, too, we have no need to make a hasty judg-

⁴ T. B. Shabbath 116 a.

⁵ S. Strauss, *Leben Jesu*, pp. 253, 255.

⁶ A. Jirku, *Die ägyptischen Listen palästinensischer und syrischer Ortsnamen*, Leipzig, 1937, pp. 10, 12. They give us instead the name of *S(h)nm* (Shunem in the Old Testament), which corresponds to the Solam of today, some seven miles to the south of Nazareth and which was inhabited in the period 2000 to 300 B.C., as well as the name of *Inhrt*, corresponding to the biblical Ananath (Jos. 19:19) probably identical with the En-Naura of today, nine miles southeast of Nazareth.

ment, because a little town of that name may well have existed in the very place mentioned in the Gospels, even if it were not named by any author. According to the Talmudic rule, "not to have seen is not yet a proof"; and in favor of the non-existence of Nazareth only *ex-silentio* deductions can be made, deductions that are in themselves always risky. On the other hand, its being mentioned in the Gospels is a sure proof of its existence. Luke (4:16 ff.) tells us that our Lord read the prophets⁷ in the synagogue of Nazareth. The text which, according to the Gospel, comes spontaneously to Jesus is one of the most fascinating, one which exactly expresses His state of mind. At the end of His reading He proclaims the truth that no prophet is honored in his own country. The whole episode, vividly described, is pulsing with life and therefore appears convincing in every detail.⁸ We must not forget that at times a town not mentioned in the Bible is, however, named in the Talmud. Accordingly we should admit that a town not mentioned in the Old Testament or in the Talmud and not even in classical literature may nevertheless be mentioned in the Gospels. At most we can say that Nazareth must have been a place of no importance. Even according to Loisy,⁹ the existence of Nazareth in the time of Christ cannot be denied. Nazareth, he says, did exist, and precisely because it did exist it was possible to use its name as an "artificial" explanation of the term "Nazareus." The two names do not derive from one another; at most they may have a common etymology.

⁷ Isa. 61.

⁸ The mention of the coming of Jesus to Nazareth in Mark 1:9 also speaks (according to Klostermann, *Das Markus-Evangelium*, 1939, p. 8) in favor of the existence of the city.

⁹ Loisy, *La naissance du Christianisme* (1933), p. 84.

Moore¹⁰ as well as Grandmaison¹¹ and Buzy¹² do not question the existence of Nazareth in the time of Christ, nor do they question the derivation of "Nazarene" from "Nazareth."

Other scholars of the highest authority, like Lagrange,¹³ Meyer,¹⁴ Caspari, Gressmann, Clemen,¹⁵ Dalman,¹⁶ affirm their belief in the existence of Nazareth in the time of Christ and the derivation of "Nazarene" from the name of the city.¹⁷

¹⁰ G. F. Moore, "Nazarene and Nazareth" in *Beginnings of Christianity* (1920), I, 426-32.

¹¹ See Léonce de Grandmaison, *Jésus-Christ, sa personne, son message, ses preuves*, II, 147.

¹² Denis Buzy, "Evangile selon Saint Matthieu" in Louis Pirot, *La Sainte Bible* (1935), IX, 23.

¹³ Lagrange, *S. Matthieu*, p. 37.

¹⁴ Meyer, *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums*, II, 423.

¹⁵ Clemen, *Religionsgeschichtliche Erklärung N. T.*, p. 20.

¹⁶ Dalman, *Les itinéraires de Jésus*, pp. 84 ff., particularly p. 90. St. Jerome: "Ibimus ad Nazareth et iuxta interpretationem nominis eius florem videbimus Galilaeae." Nazareth excelled in the beauty of its flowers. It was the flowery city. In Arabic *nadara: fulgere, florere*. Elsewhere St. Jerome says: "Flus aut virgultum eius aut separata aut custodita" and "Nazareth flos munditiae." V. S. Lyonnet, "Quoniam Nazareus vocabitur" in *Biblica*, XXV (1944), 198.

¹⁷ Ricciotti, in his work, "Perchè Gesù è nato a Bethlehem?" (in *Il Cantiere di Hirun*), states that "the dwelling in Nazareth explains regularly (notwithstanding many subtleties advanced against it by some scholars) the appellative 'Nazarene' or 'from Nazareth' which contemporaries gave to Jesus." That the derivation from "Nazareth" is not so regular and that a discussion about it cannot be merely defined as subtleties, is shown by the fact that the Gospel itself, the Fathers of the Church, St. Lawrence of Brindisi, and many eminent contemporary scholars have thought either of an entirely different explanation or of a second explanation alongside the geographical one, evidently because the first did not satisfy them fully. We, however, though our opinion may be of little value, firmly assert, as will be seen later, the existence of Nazareth in the time of Jesus and favor the derivation of "Nazarene" from the name of the city. What we are eager to state, and perhaps we may be permitted to refer to now, is that a contribution and more than a contribution to the acceptance and diffusion of the name of "Nazarene" and "Nazarenes" is another factor which we present later in this chapter.

Let us remember that the Swiss Bible (*Die heil. Schrift des A. u. N. Test.*, Zurich, 1939, p. 30 of the addenda) identifies "Nazareus" with "Nazarene"; both the forms, it continues, signify "coming from Nazareth," but "the form of the word cannot be derived from that place name." We accept, therefore, the

The existence of Nazareth, as we have pointed out, is a scientifically established fact. Nevertheless there still exist difficulties of a formal and literary order that are closely connected with the name of the city itself, difficulties that we wish to set forth, though the variations in spelling and endings of a geographical name are unimportant for the meaning which we ascribe to the epithet "Nazarene." First of all we must put the question: How is it that the name of a hamlet, insignificant in itself, even if it rises to an extraordinary significance in Gospel literature, appears not only with two different spellings, the θ or τ ending, but actually in two different forms, namely, "Nazareth" and "Nazara"? We cannot assume that the place has two names. If this hamlet was to reach such fame in the minds of contemporaries, of the apostles and of the Evangelists, how is it that the exact record has not been preserved?¹⁸ As for the transcription of the name "Nazareth" from Hebrew into Greek, there appears one more abnormality: the Hebrew letter š (sadi) is always taken in the Greek texts of the Gospel not as a σ, but as a ζ, which ordinarily stands for the Hebrew z (zajin). However, many scholars, among whom are Lagrange, E. Meyer, and

explanation "from Nazareth," but there may have been also another coefficient that has had its influence on the form of the word. And it is this that we would like to clarify through the hypothesis we advance.

¹⁸ Father Ruwet of the Pontifical Biblical Institute kindly calls my attention to the fact that the name "Gennesareth" is also found with θ and τ as well as in the form "Gennesar." (The various systems of vocalization of this name in the Targumic and Talmudic texts are given by Horowitz, *Erez Israel*, I, 217. On "Gennesareth," see also Klausner, *Jesus*, p. 318.) Without taking into account the fact that the ending -eth in *Gennesareth* is usually explained with the geographical origin from *Jam Kinnereth* ("Lake of the Harp"), with regard to the explanation of the epithet "Nazarene," these minute considerations of a philological character about geographical names are of secondary importance, as much for the existence of the city of Nazareth as for the explanation of the epithet "Nazarene." (See later our explanations of the vocalization of Semitic names in general and the arguments advanced by Dalman and Klein.)

Clemen, mention other cases where the *z* takes the place of the *s* especially if *r* comes after *s*. We might also mention that in Hebrew we find side by side the verbs *sa'ōq* and *za'ōq*, both meaning "to cry." In the same way the Aramaic *za'irā* ("small")¹⁹ corresponds to the Hebrew *sa'ir* ("young"). We must not therefore give excessive value to the fact that the Greek text of the Gospels transcribes the *s* of "Nazarene" by a *ζ*.

Greater difficulties arise in making the epithet "Nazarene" derive from the name of the city. How is it, as Guignebert rightly points out,²⁰ that it never takes the most likely forms "Nazarethenos," "Nazarethanos," or "Nazarethaios"? One should admit that the epithets of the type of "Nazarene," where the *t* or *th* are absent, must be derived from the form "Nazara." But then we should ask: If all the epithets given to Jesus come from the form "Nazara," how is it that this geographical name is the least used in the Gospel? Moreover, if all the epithets are derived from "Nazara," how is it that they take so many different endings? Whatever the meaning of the Greek word for "Nazarene," the term used should have been consistent, that is, always *Naζαρηνός* or always *Naζαραιός*, the more so since, as can be seen in the Gospel, "Nazarene" is the one epithet indissolubly connected with the name of one so eminent and so much admired as Jesus. We do not believe that these two different forms can be explained by simply stating that they are alternatives.

Klausner, who unhesitatingly affirms that Nazareth is the birthplace of Jesus,²¹ says that the Talmud mentions

¹⁹ Holzmeister, "Quoniam Nazarenus vocabitur" (in *Verbum Domini*, 1937), p. 23, gives other examples.

²⁰ Guignebert, *Jésus* (1935), p. 84.

²¹ Klausner, *Jesu*, p. 311. The fact that he entitles his work *Jesus von Naz-*

the birthplace of Jesus only in the adjectival form of *noseri*. Dalman says that the Jews used the Hebrew word *noseri* perhaps because they supposed that the place must have been called *Nosereth* in Hebrew. But he points out that the Greek forms *Ναζαρηνός* and *Ναζαραιός*, as well as the fact that in the Onomasticum the town is called Nazara, simply prove that the Jews, in calling Jesus *noseri*, wrongly reconstructed the geographical name whose main vowel sound is certainly an *a*.²² The vocalizing of the geographical name in question is the most uncertain thing imaginable. The vowels, reconstructed in an utterly hypothetical manner, vary from author to author. Among the moderns, E. Saphier gives *Naseret*, Dalman quotes the poem of Qalir with the vocalization *Nasrat*, and so also does Klausner.²³ Klein²⁴ prefers *Nosrat* because, he says, all the geographical names of the category to which the name in question belongs have an *o* in the first syllable. Dalman rejects Klein's suggestion, stating that there are other geographical names of this type with an *a* in the first syllable. As we see it, Klausner as well as Dalman is wrong in the method employed, since they first presume as a fact, certain beyond doubt, that the adjective *noseri* comes from the name of the city, and then they adapt the name of the city in such a way that it may fit in with their a priori assumption. We are of opinion, on the other hand, that any suggestion of a nexus between *noseri* and the name of a town is to be mistrusted as well as any explanation that

reth is characteristic. According to Renan, "Jesus was born in Nazareth, a little town of Galilee."

²² Dalman, *Itinéraires*, pp. 88 ff.

²³ Klausner, *op. cit.*, p. 312.

²⁴ Klein, *Ortsnamen*, p. 204; see also Cohen, "Die Bedeutung der verschiedenen Punktuationssysteme für die Aussprache des Hebräischen" in *MGWJ*, 1936, p. 394.

may be given, and instead an attempt must be made to establish the true origin of the name "Nazarene" out of our own resources and with the help of new methods of research.

Furthermore, if the epithet "Nazarene" has perhaps been given to Jesus because He was thought to have come from Nazareth, with what right could this have been applied in the same form to His disciples and followers? At most, as a derivation of His place of origin it could be fitting only for Jesus personally.²⁵ It may be objected that perhaps the city of Nazareth was in the time of Jesus a great center of Christian life and that, consequently, it could have given its name to the nascent Christianity. Haefeli, however, gives the following data. At about 200 B.C., under Emperor Septimius Severus and Emperor Caracalla, there sprang up several synagogues, whose ruins are still extant, and among them those of Horašaim (keraše) at Capharnaum (*tell hum*), and others. In this province the influence of Christianity assumed greater importance only under Constantine, when a baptized Jew, Josephus, began building Christian churches in the larger Hebrew centers of Galilee, as Nazareth, Tiberiades, Sephorides, Capharnaum. Between the years 325 and 350 the doctors of the Talmud withdrew gradually from Galilee toward Babylon.²⁶ We must not set too great value on these observations of Haefeli because sometimes we find contradictory assertions about the cities in question. Thus, whereas some commentators of the Gospel and Matt. 4:13 mention

²⁵ Salvatorelli, *Il significato di Nazareno*, 1911, p. 5. The author rightly notes: "The leader of a sect may give his name to his followers; but provided that the epithet belongs in some way to him."

²⁶ Haefeli, *Syrien und sein Libanon*, p. 337; cf. Perrella, *Luoghi Santi*, pp. 38 ff.; Paul Range, *Nazareth*, 1923.

Capharnaum as a flourishing town at the time of Jesus, Josephus Flavius regards it as no more than a village.²⁷ Nevertheless before the fourth century Nazareth could certainly not have been a great center of Christian life. Moreover, even in the seventh century it was considered a Jewish locality.²⁸

Lagrange has found another way to explain how this geographical name has become so indissolubly linked with the origins of Christianity. "Assuredly," he writes, "the epithet which connected the disciples of Jesus to Galilee and to a village that had no history, was a nickname in the thought of the Jews."²⁹ Evidently he is thinking of the episode related in John 1:46. In Lagrange's view, therefore, we have to do with a name originating in an ironical sally on the part of opponents: out of Nazareth, the little, obscure, forsaken hamlet of Galilee, from among inhabitants held to be dull-witted, nothing important, nothing good, can come; therefore Jesus, really coming out of Nazareth, is called the Nazarene, and with Him all His disciples. Lagrange in another of his works³⁰ explains this interpretation of his by saying that the prophets had foretold that the Redeemer would be unrecognized and despised. However, neither the explanation nor his arguments are such as to settle the doubts and remove the difficulties. The soldiers who go to arrest Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane say they are seeking "Jesus the Nazarene." At a moment when this declaration assumes the austere character of a juridical formality, it would hardly have been thought fitting to use an epithet that smacks of irony.

²⁷ *Vita*, p. 403.

²⁸ S. Klein in *Jüd. Lexikon*, IV, 455.

²⁹ Lagrange, *St. Matthieu*, p. 39.

³⁰ Lagrange, *Evangile*, p. 44.

And Jesus would not have answered simply, "I am He," ²¹ thus almost admitting and accepting this nickname. Those possessed of devils who call on Him for help would not have called Him "Jesus the Nazarene" ²² if this name had been a jest or an insult.

At that most solemn moment in the history of Christianity, which is ushered in immediately after the death of Christ, the follower who watches by His tomb and announces His resurrection also makes use of the expression "Jesus the Nazarene." ²³ We must admit either that His disciples did not grasp the ironical meaning of the expression or that, aware of its perhaps jocular but certainly irreverent origin, they likewise made use of it even before the open tomb of the Master. Both these hypotheses are, to us, unacceptable. Even the earliest followers of the apostles would hardly have permitted a slight to the veneration of the Master by continuing to refer to Him in Gospel literature under a name of questionable origin. In spite of the episode in John 1:46, Lagrange's interpretation is not ac-

²¹ John 18:5 ff.

²² Mark 1:24; Luke 4:34.

²³ Mark 16:6; see also Luke 24:19. According to Acts 22:8, Jesus also *post mortem* defines Himself "Jesus the Nazarene." Bury, *op. cit.*, p. 24: "We do not perceive the least irony in the explanations of the crowd on Palm Sunday: it is the prophet Jesus of Nazareth of Galilee (Matt. 21:11). When the Talmud calls Jesus the Nazarene (*nazir*) and the Christians the Nazarenes (*nazirim*), assuredly it does not intend to give Him a title of glory, but neither is it a term of contempt," but we cannot follow the learned author when he asserts that the question is simply "d'un qualificatif qui décore l'humilité des origines; et de même l'appellation *secte des Nazaréens* qui avait cours vers l'an 60 de notre ère" (Acts 24:5). It seems to us that neither the place of origin nor the place of birth of the founder of a religious movement is sufficient to become a common denomination for all those who follow him. Jesus could have been called the Nazarene, but could all the disciples and followers be so called? The *neser* (*ish*) in Isaías as a Messianic name was fitting for Jesus, but not for the disciples and the followers. For this reason Lagrange—we think rightly so—regards "Nazarene" as a *nomen agentis*.

ceptable. More justifiable is the explanation which Guignebert ²⁴ gives of this passage of the Gospel. He says that the episode with its ironical mention of Nazareth, the insignificant hamlet, at least proves that the writer, though believing that Jesus had come from Nazareth, has not yet forgotten the earlier tradition which gave the epithet "Nazarene" a meaning quite different from that of a reference to a place of origin and the recalling of a hamlet in Galilee.

Other Catholic authors are probably thinking of the same passage in John 1:46 when they say that the name "Nazarene" was given Jesus by the hostile, anti-Christian Jewish mob, prompted by a feeling of aversion. This view is accepted likewise by Schuster and by many others. However, the same authors then relate that an angel or, according to another Gospel, two angels, ask the women who have found the tomb empty: "Seek ye Jesus the Nazarene?" But can we admit that the angels made use of a name inspired by a sense of aversion?

The ironical reference to the little hamlet of Nazareth is a play on words in bad taste on the lips of foes, who know that "Nazarene" has an exalted, distinctive, and noble meaning, and try to minimize it by giving it a disparaging sense. This use of the word is ironical, but to explain the meaning of "Nazarene" in this derogatory sense is not the way that leads to rigorously scientific truth, to that truth which cannot fail to please all men of good will.

There is no need to deny the existence of Nazareth, though, according to various modern authors, *Naζωραῖος*

²⁴ Guignebert, *Jésus*, p. 87.

had already a specific meaning before it became associated with a geographical name.²⁶

Matthew, who, as we have said, was the first to derive the name "Nazarene" from the city of Nazareth, gives at the same time a much deeper explanation of this name. He relates that Joseph, who with Jesus and Mary had sought shelter in Egypt to escape the persecution of Herod, on his return to his own land went and dwelt "in a city called Nazareth, that it might be fulfilled which was said by the prophets: That He shall be called a Nazarene."²⁷ With reference to this passage, Father Zampini remarks: "Among the prophecies we note the one concerning the birthplace of Christ and that of the massacre of the Holy Innocents of Bethlehem out of hatred for the infant Jesus; but we have failed to find the other one that refers to the name, the 'Nazarene' or 'Nazareus.' In the first place the Evangelist says *per prophetam*, and we know the prophet is Micheas; in the second, *per Jeremiam prophetam*; in the third, *per prophetas*. Now, who are these prophets that have pointed to the city where Jesus was conceived and brought up? Strictly speaking, no prophet ever had in mind or ever wrote the name of Nazareth, which probably in their days did not even exist."²⁸ But for Matthew, "Nazarene" is undoubtedly a Messianic name. In the Old Testament, as St. Jerome already observed, there is no passage in which it is said that the Messiah will be called the Nazarene; and we shall deal with this in a separate chapter. For the moment let us merely note that it is evidently a reference to Isa. 11:1, which reads: "And there shall come forth a rod (*hoter*) out of the

²⁶ Klostermann, *Markus*, p. 8.

²⁷ Matt. 2:23.

²⁸ Zampini, *Manuale del Vangelo*, p. 91.

root of Jesse and a flower (*nèser*) shall rise up out of his root." Others translate the second hemistic, "and a bud shall spring out of its root." The Vulgate has: "et *flos de radice eius ascendet*." *Hoter*, Assyrian *hutaru*, means "branch" and is equivalent to the Hebrew *shèbhet* ("rod, scepter"). *Nèser*, which the Vulgate translates *flos*, is the Assyrian *nadira* ("to grow green"), and indicates the young shoot of the main root. The *flos* of the Vulgate is owing to the desire to make *nèser* agree with the verb *jifreh* of the Masoretic text. Procksch²⁹ instead leaves to *nèser* its meaning of "branch" and proposes for the verb *jifreh* (which the Vulgate translates "ascendet" and the Septuagint *ἀνθίσσεται*) its correction to *jifrah*, which means "to sprout out." Matthew, in all probability, refers to the Messianic picture given in Isa. 11:1, in which is to be found the word *nèser*, which offers some connection with Nazareth.

Naturally we ask: Is it the *nèser* of Isaias that has given rise to the idea of Nazareth, or has the name of the city been associated with a word found in a text already well known and eminently Messianic in character? Or again: Did the name *noseri* ("Nazarene"), not altogether clear in meaning at the time the Gospels were compiled, lead to the thought of *nèser* and to a city with a similar name? We are of opinion that the exegesis of Matthew which connects "Nazarene" to "Nazareth" must be regarded as an expedient dear to the haggadists, the narrative rabbis of the time. It is that method of explanation which in Aramaic terminology of the Talmud is called *asmakhta be' almā* ("generic support"), that is, reference of purely allusive character.³⁰

²⁹ Procksch, *Isaia I*, p. 152.

³⁰ Father Hippolyte Leroy argues, as we do, in *Jésus-Christ, sa vie, son temps*

Messianic hopes gave rise to various ideas about the name of the Messiah. More than one is provided by the biblical passages to which tradition usually attributes a Messianic character. "Behold the days come," Jeremias announces, "and I will raise up to David a just branch (*semah saddiq*) and a king shall reign and shall be wise and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. . . . And this is the name that they shall call him: the Lord, our Just One (*sidqenu*)."⁴⁰ *Saddiq* ("just") is therefore a Messianic name. The same prophet reverts once more to the subject: ⁴¹ "In those days and at that time I will make the bud of justice to spring forth unto David; and he shall do judgment and justice in the earth. In those days shall Juda be saved and Jerusalem shall dwell securely. And this is the name that they shall call him: the Lord, our Just One."⁴² In Zach. 3:8 we read: "For behold I will bring My servant *semah*." Side by side with *saddiq*, *sidqenu*, we have therefore also the name *semah*. Even more explicit is Zach. 6:12: "Behold a man, *semah* is his name." The sentence that follows *unitahtaw jismah* (the verb is made to agree in sound with the noun) is by some translated: "From under shall rise"; by others: "From his ground shall bring forth"; still others translate: "He shall grow up out of his place." With the Messianic hope was associated the idea of a *semah dawid*, of a Davidic shoot. Wellhausen

(1901), pp. 88 ff.: "In the geographical name Nazarene is contained already, according to St. Matthew, an allusion to *neser* of prophetic memory." Father Buzy (cf. cit., p. 24) has a similar idea. About the relationship with *neser* in Isaías, he says: "Ce rapprochement, oui, si l'on veut, ce jeu de mots est, philologiquement parlant, aussi bon, et même sensiblement meilleur que beaucoup d'autres de l'A.T. Des chrétiens et des Juifs, ayant même culture que les évangélistes, loin d'en être choqués, devaient le trouver heureux."

⁴⁰ Jer. 33:5.

⁴¹ Jer. 33:15.

⁴² Evidently we must read him.

supposes that the budding out, *mitahtaw*, might mean the blossoming of a new dynasty; Hitzig-Haller believes it to mean "under him," that is, "wherever he passes" everything shall bud, everything shall blossom out. This explanation is also found in a recent work of H. Schmidt.⁴³ Sellin explains: "He is called *semah* ('bud') because he shall bud out from its roots, from his foundation, that is, he shall rise, shall aspire to the heights, shall reach the heights."⁴⁴ His budding out gives him the name *semah* ("bud") which is the personification, the synthesis, the final expression of budding.

In the ostraca of Samaria, documents that go back to the ninth century B.C., we find the proper name "Bedio." Some consider this name a parallel to Bedjah in Esra 10:35, that is, to *bd* ("branch, shoot"). If this interpretation should be correct, it would then be possible to say that already in the ninth century B.C. there existed a name of the type of *semah J.* ("shoot of God").⁴⁵ Evidently the name occurring in the ostraca has no Messianic signification. A Messianic name par excellence is David. Some authors erroneously maintain that the Messianic idea is nothing but the expectation of a miraculous return of David, the king par excellence, the bringer of a new life, full and glorious.

Talmudic literature knows the Messianic name Menahem ("the comforter"). To this name or at least to this idea, Luke 2:25 also refers. According to the account con-

⁴³ According to Schmidt, "Das vierte Nachtgesicht des Propheten Zacharja," in ZAW, 1936, pp. 59 f., at the "end of days" a marvelous blessing of nature will be made manifest. That is why the prophet announces: I will bring forth my servant *semah*, 'branch.' Wherever he shall put his foot everything shall bud, everything shall flower. This marvelous phenomenon constitutes the inner meaning of the obscure expression *unitahtaw jismah*.

⁴⁴ Sellin, *Das Zwölfprophetenbuch*, II, 522.

⁴⁵ On this subject, see Diringer, *Le inscrizioni antico-ebraiche palestinesi* (1934), p. 43.

tained in the Palestinian Talmud,⁴⁶ the Messiah is called David or Semah or Menahem. He is the son of Hizqiāh and springs from Birath malkā, near Bethlehem of Juda. The mother of the Messiah is there called the "mother of Menahem." Menahem is born on the day of the destruction of the Temple, and this according to the prophetic text: The Liban ("Temple") shall fall into the hands of a potentate and a "branch shall spring out of the stem of Jesse."⁴⁷

With regard to *semah* we must mention that the name has the form of a substantive and not of an adjective. In the same way, bearing in mind Isa. 11:1, the Messiah should accordingly have been called *nēser*. The agreement with the text of Isaias would be reached anyhow, as Billerbeck⁴⁸ points out, according to the hermeneutic Talmudic formula which presupposes the following reasoning: In Isa. 11:1 we must not read *nēser* but *noṣeri*. However, it would have been better had they kept the name *nēser*, on the type of the Messianic *semah*. *Nēser* exists also as a proper name. According to a rabbinical source, one of the disciples of Jesus is called *Nēser*;⁴⁹ later on we also find a Ben *Nēser*.⁵⁰ If the appellative of Jesus had reference to the *nēser* contained in Isaias, it should have remained unchanged; when transformed into *noṣeri*, by the ending added it takes rather the meaning of "offspring of *nēser*" (on the type of *qorah-qarhi*).⁵¹ Offspring of a branch or of a bud would be meaningless, and offspring of a real man

⁴⁶ E. Vilno, 1927, *Berakhoth*, *perek* II, *hal.* 4, p. 17 a and b.

⁴⁷ Isa. 11:14. On other Messianic names in the Talmudic period, see T. B. *Sanhedrin*, p. 98 b.

⁴⁸ Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, I, 94.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 95, and Klausner, *Jesus*, p. 31.

⁵⁰ Strack-Billerbeck, *op. cit.*, I, 95.

⁵¹ On the possibility of explaining the ending of *noṣeri* as indication of membership of a group, see later.

called *Nēser* is unacceptable in the case of Jesus since in His family there is no ancestor of this name.⁵²

If "Nazarene" were to be a Messianic name deriving exclusively from *nēser*, again we could not understand how it was applied to the disciples and to the followers of Jesus, who certainly could not stand as Messiahs. Furthermore, if everyone had taken the word "Nazarene" as referring only to the *nēser*, which is spoken of in Isaias, perhaps this appellation might have been used by the enemies of Jesus, even by those who were utterly opposed to His Messianic mission. Indeed we see in Mark 1:24 the man possessed by an unclean spirit begin to call out: "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus the Nazarene?" And the maid-servant of the high priest, who certainly was not a follower of the new doctrine, says to Peter: "Thou also wast with Jesus the Nazarene."⁵³

According to Luke 2:1-35, Joseph goes from Nazareth to Bethlehem, there to be registered. There Jesus is born. The shepherds receive from an angel the news that the Redeemer is born and they go to Bethlehem. After the circumcision the parents take the infant to Jerusalem there to be presented in the Temple, and then they return to Nazareth. Of the three cities mentioned, only Nazareth has no value from a Messianic point of view.

In Nazareth, as the Gospels relate, took place, through the instrumentality of an angel, the annunciation of the birth, but not the birth itself. Why, then, should this very city be chosen to give the Messiah His name? Jerusalem is the city of David the king from whose line the Redeemer

⁵² On *nēser* in connection with *noṣeri*, see Strack-Billerbeck, *op. cit.*, pp. 93 ff. On the names of the Messiah, see also Bousset, *Die Religion des Judentums im spätantiken und spätchristlichen Zeitalter* (1926), pp. 226 ff.

⁵³ Mark 14:67.

was to come. Bethlehem is the city of David, and the prophets of the Old Testament had foretold that it was destined to be the cradle of the ruler of Israel,⁵⁴ and its origin belongs to a remote past. Matthew also (6:2) speaks of the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem in the time of Herod. Asked by the King where the Christ should be born, the scribes answered: "In Bethlehem of Juda."⁵⁵ For it is written by the prophet: And thou, Bethlehem, the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda; for out of thee shall come forth the Captain that shall rule My people Israel." Therefore, had Jesus been called the Bethlehemite, from His birthplace, His name would have been Messianic, it would have been explicitly linked with a biblical text known and mentioned by the Gospel, and would also have had the advantage of being related to a universally known fact, that is, His birth in Bethlehem, whereas the Annunciation was an event of eminently mystical character and known only to very few.

Now it is odd that Matthew, who had before his eyes in the biography of Jesus the names of Jerusalem and Bethlehem, and who knew all the current Messianic names, should have preferred in some way to give luster to the name of an insignificant hamlet, giving it a correlation with *nēser*, which in its turn was much known as a Messianic name. Evidently Matthew is trying to fuse three elements: Joseph went to Nazareth so that the Child might be called Nazarene.⁵⁶ If Matthew had been thinking only of a Messianic title, he could have chosen one of those which were already established as Messianic titles; if he had wished to

⁵⁴ Michæl 5:1.

⁵⁵ Matt. 2:5 L.

⁵⁶ See *infra*, chap. 4.

connect it with the name of a city, he could have found cities that play some part in the life of Jesus and at that the Messianic par excellence. On the contrary he refers to a city and a name totally unknown for their Messianic character.

Jesus who was born in Bethlehem is not called the Bethlehemite; Jesus whose presentation in the Temple took place in Jerusalem is not called the Jerusalemite. He receives none of those famous Messianic names which for centuries had lived in the hearts of the people. On the contrary, it is from a newly coined Messianic name and from the name of a forlorn and obscure place, a place that was but the original residence of His family, that the Redeemer takes the most strikingly characteristic appellation and the one most intimately bound up with His name. Is such a phenomenon explicable? Why should we agree that the obscure Nazareth, unknown to all, could accomplish what the radiant and glorious city of Bethlehem, set in the seraphic light given her by the prophets, failed to do? Nazareth could enter the Gospel story only in the radiant wake lit up by Jesus the Nazarene and not vice versa. Of course the little town really existed, but it was enough that there should exist in some remote spot far from life's bustle a little center of devotees of Jesus the Nazarene to make a Nazareth or, better still, a Nazara, a dwelling place of Nazarenes. It was Jesus, we think, who made Nazareth a celebrated place, not Nazareth that carried Jesus to the imperishable glory of the Nazarene.

We are inclined to think that it is the Evangelist of the Jewish Christians who, normally seeing in the more important events the fulfilling of an Old Testament prophecy, thinks that "Nazarene" represents the fulfillment of a

prophecy, and then there comes into his mind the idea of *nēṣer*. As for the allusion to the prophetic message, Meyer⁵⁷ supposes, erroneously we believe, that it is a quotation invented by Matthew. However that may be, the solution envisaged implicitly and not explicitly by the Evangelist does not solve the problem of the meaning of "Nazarene."

Lidzbarski⁵⁸ develops another theory. He makes *nōserī* come from the Hebrew *naṣōr*, which means "observe, preserve." *Nōserī* (plural, *nōserim*) would then be "an observer," or a member of a sect of observers. To the Hebrew verb *naṣōr* corresponds the Aramaic *netār*. The Aramaic ending used for forming a noun from a verb is *-aia*. Instead of adding *ntr*, a very common Aramaic root, the common ending *-aia*, an exception has been made, according to Lidzbarski. The Hebrew *naṣōr* has been taken and to it has been added the Aramaic ending so as to obtain the forms *naṣraia* and *naṣoraia*. From these two Hebrew-Aramaic forms the two Greek forms *Nāṣapīoī* and *Naζωpāioī* derived their origin.

On this theory we may ask why this hybrid Hebrew-Aramaic word should have been created. And why should there have been a desire further to produce a doublet of this form? Moreover, the word *naṣōr* by itself has no precise meaning. It has the generic meaning of "to take care of, to save"; but this meaning assumes many shades according to the complement that follows it. At times it denotes the protection granted by the Lord to His faithful servants.⁵⁹ At other times, the act of "refraining" from

⁵⁷ Meyer, *Ursprung*, II, 423.

⁵⁸ See Lagrange, *St. Matthieu*, p. 57.

⁵⁹ Ps. 30:22.

speaking evil.⁶⁰ It refers also to the man who tends the fig tree so that he may enjoy its fruit.⁶¹ Lastly it is found to mean "the one who observes" the law and the covenant.⁶² The verb *naṣōr* is also correlated to the idea of the observance of the precepts of the *torōth* and of wisdom,⁶³ and this seems to us the very meaning most adaptable to the case, the meaning scholars generally have in mind when they understand the term *nōserī* as "observer."⁶⁴ But then may we perhaps say that Jesus and His disciples were the authentic exponents of religious observance? Jesus who interprets the prohibition of leavened bread during the paschal time as a less important matter than the leaven of bitterness kept in the heart, Jesus who permits His disciples to gather ears of corn on the Sabbath day, can He be the genuine representative of observance according to the Pharisees? And even if this had been one of His principal qualities, it would not have made Him stand out among His contemporaries, because in His time the greater part of the people followed the teaching of the Pharisees, whose ideal was precisely the observance of the precepts.

Ziminzern, the Assyriologist, gives to the root *naṣor*, not the meaning of "to keep the observance," which, in fact, if applied to Christians would not correspond at all with their mode of life, but that of "to keep the mysteries." He bases this on the Babylonian term *nisirtu*, meaning "mystery."⁶⁵ But it must be noted that the Jews of that

⁶⁰ Ps. 33:14.

⁶¹ Prov. 27:18.

⁶² Ps. 109:2; 24:10.

⁶³ Ps. 78:7; 104:45; Prov. 5:2.

⁶⁴ Some also think perhaps of the observance of the rules about purity, but we never find this idea associated with the term *naṣor* and it is therefore unlikely to have come to the minds of the Hebrew masses of the day.

⁶⁵ See Lagrange, *St. Matthieu*, p. 58.

time would hardly have known the Babylonian term.

According to Lagrange,⁶⁶ the Mandaeans were called *nasoraia*, a term that could not have been borrowed from the Greek, but from a Syriac form denoting an old sect, anterior to Christianity, namely, the *Nasoraios*, mentioned by Epiphanius⁶⁷ the historian of heresies, who lived in the fourth century of our era. Halévy makes their name come from *nasora* ("prophet" or "singer of hymns").⁶⁸ Father Anastasio⁶⁹ suggests as the origin of their name the Syriac *nesar*, meaning "to sing," "to celebrate," "to glorify (God)." This name, says Lagrange, might have been for the Mandaeans a title of honor or a nickname inasmuch as *nesar* corresponds to the Hebrew *hamṣatsefim*, found in Isaías 8:19, where the art of magic is spoken of. *Ṣiṣṣēf* is a repetitive word, the onomatopoeic of *safaj*, "to twitter." The Mandaeans-Nazorites are supposed to have been the singers of a new faith in new hymns, and were more or less suspected of magic. But the derivation of early Christianity from Mandaeanism is utterly impossible, as all scholars agree. And, if this were not enough, several critics shed doubt on the reliability of Epiphanius' assertion⁷⁰ and are not at all convinced of the existence of a pre-Christian sect called *Nasoraios*.

Furthermore, because, as Guignebert⁷¹ puts it, we know

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁶⁷ *Haer.*, XVIII, 1, 1.

⁶⁸ See Clemen, *Erläuterung*, p. 202.

⁶⁹ See Lagrange, *La grotte mandéenne*, p. 409.

⁷⁰ Hoennicke (*Judentumchristentum*, pp. 101, 230) stresses the unreliability of information about the Nazarites. He says that the information of Epiphanius in this matter does not derive from Julius Africanus, who knew Palestine very well, but from other less reliable sources, which he gathered up and transmitted without further critical sense. Liezmann, *Église ancienne*, says that unfortunately Epiphanius is very confused in what he says about Nazarites, so that it is difficult to get historical truth from him.

⁷¹ Guignebert, *Le monde juif*, p. 3.

that "the early Christians called themselves the elect, the saints, the faithful, the disciples," it seems to us improbable that the early Christians had officially assumed the name of a pre-existing sect, whose trend they did not follow. We do not consider it at all necessary to build up theories that link early Christianity with the names of pre-existing sects though we are eager to stress the existence and the usage of the verb *n-s-r* and of the substantive *nasōrā* with the meaning of "sing, celebrate, glorify (God), prophesy."

It is sufficient for us to emphasize that *n-s-r* is the Aramaic equivalent of the Hebrew *ṣiṣṣēf* ("to twitter, to sing").⁷² When speech rises to the highest level of perfection, when the content of *n-s-r* becomes spiritualized to reach the highest peaks where speech becomes a sublime song, the one who possesses such a marvelous gift becomes a *naṣōrā*, that is, a singer-prophet.

According to Meyer,⁷³ in *Naṣapnōs* the ending *ηνος*, which represents the *ethnikon*, was subsequently altered into the ending *ənos*, preferred by the sect. Thus is created *Naṣoraios*, of the *ʃa'ulā* form, very common in Aramaic appellatives. According to Meyer, it was considered that the derivation from the insignificant native *hamṣet* was no longer sufficient, and it was therefore thought to give to

⁷² In reality, it is an evolution not unlike that of the verb *n-b'*, from which comes *nābi* ("prophet"). In the various Semitic languages (cf. Gesenius-Buhl, no. 16) we have the meanings: slight sound, to announce, to call, to lament, priest-crier, to bark, to speak, one who speaks (aloud), orator. Similarly the South Arabic *d m-r* for which the correlatives mean: *cerinit*, *cerinit organo quad ore inflatur*, *usuperavit*, may then take the meaning of, *solemniter pronunciat*, *publice praedicavit* (cf. C. Conti Rossini, *Christianitas arabica meridionalis epigraphica*, 1931, p. 129). For the passing from the meaning "to bark" (or "to sing") to "to speak," cf. also S. Krauss, *Talmudische Archäologie*, III, 92, 107.

⁷³ Meyer, *Ursprung*, II, 423, 409, 424.

early Christianity a sectarian name meaning "the observants." The followers of Christ, however, have nothing to do with the sect of the *Narapaios*. The term *Naζωραιος* could well belong to the dialect of Galilee.

Lagrange moves close to this theory. But he does not admit that the *nomen agentis* *Naζωραιος* had taken the place of the aristocratic *Naζαρηνοι*. For him⁷⁴ the *Naζαρηνοι*, the name by which the early Christians were known, thanks to the fact that their Master was from Nazareth, could also assume in time, without totally abandoning their earlier name, the *nomen agentis* *Naζωραιος*. This name had the advantage of being able to be adapted to a religious group, and was better suited to designate a sect. By a strange leap backwards, this name may then have been also applied to the Founder of Christianity. Of all this development we have no historical trace. But the ancients, says Lagrange, were content with unsatisfactory etymologies so that perhaps *Naζωραιος* has its origin in "Nazareth," however ungrammatical this form may be. According to Lagrange, "it would be surprising if from the very beginning the terms *Naζαρηνοι* and *Naζωραιος* had been used simultaneously."⁷⁵ To us, on the contrary, it does not seem probable that the term *Naζωραιος* had appeared at a later time, and had then been applied to Jesus. According to the Gospels the Master had already assumed this title. From the New Testament it appears that the two terms are contemporaneous, and are interchangeable without any sense of incongruity.⁷⁶ If there had been any incongruity, only with some difficulty could they have been interchangeable and found side by side on the pages of the

⁷⁴ Lagrange, *La gnose mandécanne*, p. 500.

⁷⁵ Lagrange, *St. Matthieu*, p. 58.

⁷⁶ Niccoli (*Enc. It.*, s. v. *Nazarei*) says that in the New Testament form *Ιησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος* coexists by equal right with *Ιησοῦς ὁ Ναζαρηνός*.

Gospels, in every circumstance of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. The ancients, even if not very expert in etymologies, were certainly fully aware of the meaning of a name given to a personality that stood at the center of the quarrels around them.

According to Loisy,⁷⁷ it is certain that "Nazarene" is the name of a sect unrelated to the city of Nazareth. The name is found with some Jewish-Christian sects and it is borne also by the Mandaeans. We may think that it belonged at first to the Baptist sect from which Christianity originally derives. And it was to wipe out the original relationship of Jesus and His sect with that of the Baptist that they made use of the name of the city of Nazareth to explain artificially the name "Nazarene." In another of his books Loisy states again that the qualification of "Nazarene" has nothing to do with the city of Nazareth and confirms its derivation from *nōsēr* ("observants"): "In this word undoubtedly we should see the characteristic of John and his disciples, namely, baptism."⁷⁸

Adolfo Omodeo also thinks that the appellative "Nazareus" does not come from "Nazareth" but "from the sect of the Baptist, with which Jesus must have been in more intimate relationship than appears from tradition."⁷⁹ The Friedlander also is of opinion that Jesus belonged to the pre-Christian Nazarene sect to which it is said that John the Baptist belonged. Rightly Guignebert⁸⁰ wonders if the existence of such a sect is well founded.

Is it permissible, therefore, in dealing with a subject of so serious and delicate a nature, to build on such insecure foundations? May we be allowed to ask again whether

⁷⁷ Loisy, *Christianisme*, pp. 84 ff.

⁷⁸ Loisy, *Les origines du Nouveau Testament*, p. 36.

⁷⁹ Omodeo, *Jesus il Nazareo* (1927), p. 14.

⁸⁰ Guignebert, *Jesus*, p. 89.

it is possible that a personality so eminent and so unique as that of Jesus received its characteristic and distinguishing epithet from a sect already in existence? In examining the opinions of these authors, we were faced, so to speak, with a discordant concord. There are those who admit the origin of the title from the name of a town and its passing to the name of a sect. The name of a sect in its turn is reputed as borrowed from a pre-existing sect, while the existence of the latter is questioned or absolutely denied by the most cautious. Thus it is that, viewed critically, this agglomeration of hypotheses looks like a continual tiresome effort, a perpetual going round and round the same point, without the possibility of finding a way out. In all this ebb and flow of opinions and counteropinions, we should like to emphasize a few essential facts: there is no reason for denying the existence of Nazareth at the time of Christ; there is equally no reason for stressing too much the affirmation that the ethnical name or, at least, it alone has given rise to the appellative of Jesus and His followers.

It is not prudent to regard the appellative as borrowed from the name of some sect or imposed as a label. In our view Christ and His followers certainly did not intend to give themselves a name; they were absorbed entirely in the new world that had blossomed out of their minds and hearts. The surrounding crowds noticing these men so different from others in their life and work, in their doctrine and their preaching, gave them collectively a name which reflected all these traits. Salvatorelli, in a work published in 1911, holds that "Nazarene is identical with the Hebrew *nazir*, or at least it is of the same root."⁸¹

⁸¹ Salvatorelli, *Nazareno*, p. 15. As the author kindly informs me by letter, he now renounces the theory he expounded some time ago with so much learning and so much insight.

Guignebert, also, after weighing all the explanations adduced for the name "Nazarene," proposes the idea that the early Christians called Jesus the *Nazir*, that is, "he who vowed, consecrated, himself to God, the man with the divine and omnipotent name, the man sent by God, the Holy One of God."⁸² Guignebert has, however, in addition to various writers of ancient literature,⁸³ an illustrious precursor in the person of the famous Capuchin St. Lawrence of Brindisi, who in his *Mariale*⁸⁴ says that Jesus was conceived in Nazareth, "wherefore He was called the Nazarene. . . . And Christians were called Nazarenes, the sect of Nazarenes, as we read in the Acts of Apostles. But regarding Christ, Matthew especially teaches that He went down to His city Nazareth because it was written in the Prophets that He will be called a Nazarene. For Joseph, the most beloved son of the patriarch Jacob, a remarkable figure and image of Christ, was called Nazareus. In like manner Samson, savior of his people in the figure of Christ, was called Nazaraeus."

From this passage it is clear that St. Lawrence at first derives "Nazareus" from "Nazareth," but then he thinks of the derivation from *nazir*, that is, of *nazireus*, meaning "one consecrated." Father Zampini also is of the opinion that "Nazareus," and more personally "Nazareus," means nothing but "holy." This learned author appeals to St. Jerome's idea: "Nazareus means holy and in the Sacred Books the Redeemer is often called the Holy One. And where Isa. 11:1 says that 'there shall come forth a rod of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall rise up out of his root,' it can be translated 'Nazareus,' because the root of the name

⁸² Guignebert, *Jesus*, p. 93.

⁸³ Salvatorelli, *Nazareno*, p. 15.

⁸⁴ St. Lawrence of Brindisi, *Opera omnia*, Vol. 1, *Mariale*, 1928, p. 115.

'Nazareth' means 'flower.'⁶⁰ Since so many celebrated men in the world of science still make the word "Nazarene" come from *nazir*,⁶¹ it becomes necessary to examine briefly how the phenomenon of the Nazarate is viewed in the light of modern scientific thought.

A man can be consecrated in a particular way to the Divinity by a vow of his parents, as still happens in Palestine, or by a vow of his own. He becomes then a *nazir*, one segregated from the multitude, and is bound in his conduct to some renunciation: he must not cut his hair, not drink wine or other stimulants, not eat anything impure.⁶² Auerbach points out that though the *nazir* is not bound to the Divinity in any particular way, yet the Nazarate is of a special historical importance for the development of prophetism because, with his ideal of abstinence, he gives himself up to an ascetical, nomadic, life, to that life, in short, which is an indispensable element of prophetism.⁶³ Therefore if the Nazarate is the first step⁶⁴ to the awakening of the sacred flame of prophetism, evidently the *nazir* is psychically bound to the Divinity. According to Lods,⁶⁵ the Nazarate, or the act of consecration of a son by the parents, aims at inducing the Lord to take possession of the man, and to communicate His Spirit to him, by introducing into him a power that especially resides in his hair. The abstention from wine has a double aim: to avoid inebriation, which is reputed to be the awakening of a

⁶⁰ Zampini, *Vangelo*, p. 92.

⁶¹ Let us remember the opinions expressed by Schaefer and by Lyonnet, *Quintum Nazarenus*.

⁶² Judges 13:5; 16:17.

⁶³ Auerbach, *Wüste und gelobtes Land* (1936), p. 106.

⁶⁴ On prophetism and nazirship, see the next page.

⁶⁵ Lods, *Israël*, pp. 553 ff.

power other than the divine⁶⁶ and, in the second place, as it was with the Rechabites at the time of Jeremias, to return to the customs of nomadic life, considered as a perfect antithesis of the enjoyable life of Canaan. This idea of Lods seems right inasmuch as the Nazarate represents a step backward in respect of certain joys of life, a voluntary restriction of the sphere of the rights of man. To what purpose? For whose benefit? We think the Nazarate is a phenomenon like the herem;⁶⁷ something belonging to the human sphere is sacrificed to make the human sphere enter into that of the divine. The *nazireus* therefore renounces something of his own, something human, evidently to introduce the human into the sphere of the divine. "A *nazir*," as Wendel⁶⁸ defines it, "is he who in the anguish of his soul declares sacred, taboo, what rightly belongs to men."

It is not known, however, that the prophets became Nazarites. H. H. Schaefer⁶⁹ is of opinion that Matthew, writing in Greek *Ναζηραῖος* intends to refer to the forms *ναζίραιος*, *ναζείραιος*, *ναζηραῖος*, by which the Septuagint translates the Hebrew *nāzir*. Even St. Jerome, after speaking of *nēser*, *flos*, in reference to Isaias (an interpretation suggested to him by "eruditii Hebraeorum"), passes to "Nazarene" (*nāzir*) as meaning "holy."⁷⁰ This is not the case of a literal quotation of a biblical text, because in that event the Evangelist would have said "quod dictum

⁶⁶ St. Paul (Eph. 5:18) says: "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is luxury; but be ye filled with the Holy Spirit."

⁶⁷ On *herem*, see I. Zolli, *Israele*, pp. 51, 106, 347; on *nazarate*, *ibid.*, pp. 285 ff.

⁶⁸ Wendel, *Das israelitisch-jüdische Gelübde* (1931), pp. 115, 93.

⁶⁹ Theol. Wb., ed. G. Kittel, IV, 383.

⁷⁰ PL, XXVI, 26 ff.

est per prophetam." The Gospel appeals to the spirit of the Scriptures, not to the letter; hence "Nazareus" is interpreted as meaning "sanctus."

Father Lyonnet⁹⁶ starts from the supposition that the people of Palestine and of Galilee pronounced the s in *Nazareth* and *neṣer* more as a z (*zajin*) and thus were led to think of deriving the meaning of "Nazarene" from *nāzir*, that is, *nazireus* ("holy"), which would constitute "the only etymology that counts," because "the living etymology in the mind of the people is the language that they speak." Knabenbauer's objection that "Messias is nowhere called *naziraeus*, nor does it ever include the idea of life, which attached to *naziraeus*," and the objection of Plummer, that "no connection with Nazirite can be intended; our Lord was not a Nazirite,"⁹⁷ could not be such to the people. One sees from the translation of the Septuagint, says Lyonnet, that *nazireus* is equivalent to "holy" and at the moment of the annunciation to Mary it is already said, "and He shall be called holy"; therefore the practice of the Nazirites becomes superfluous. It may be true, says Father Lyonnet,⁹⁸ that "on the lips of the Jews it was undoubtedly a term of contempt, but for the Christians the word evoked ideas of consecration."

It seems to us difficult to accept the view that the Jews called Jesus and the apostles "holy," nor is it easy to admit that the name should have undergone in a short time so radical a change of meaning. Holiness was a conception much revered among the Jews. Neither can all have fallen into error, as proved by the fact that someone said "Naza-

⁹⁶ *Op. cit.*, p. 203.

⁹⁷ Similarly Theodor Zahn, *Das Evang. des Matthäus* (1905), p. 113.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

rene" with the meaning of having one's origin in a little provincial place, nor can all have agreed to accept the error. "Nazarene" can but mean something that is spontaneously repeated by all, because it corresponds to a reality, to an evident fact. The "He shall be called holy" of the annunciation was not public property. The outward mark of the Nazirite, the long hair, was absent. The passing to the meaning of *nazireus* ("holy") is reserved to the learned; it could not be made by the people. These are probably the reasons that induced Father Lyonnet to espouse his ideas with praiseworthy caution.

Lods, too, is opposed to the idea of linking "Nazireus" with "Nazirite." But as for Jesus having belonged to a group of *nanzirei*, there is "no shade of evidence," says Lods,⁹⁹ that the Nazirites had formed a group as the Rechabites had. This fact excludes a priori the possibility of considering the early Nazarenes as a group of Nazirites. The Nazarate has not in its history any tradition as a corporative organization. Moreover, as we have seen, the Nazarate is a consecration limited in time and limited to one given type of abstinence and, as Guignebert himself points out, we know nothing about the vows of abstinence observed by Jesus. Then Guignebert reads too much into the term *nazir* ("one who abstains") when he attributes to it the meaning of "the one sent by the Lord, the Holy One of God." Where is the philological foundation, where are the historical facts, that can validate such a hypothesis? And why is the eminent and venerated editor of the Mishnah, the *corpus juris* of the Talmud, not called *Rabbenu ha-nazir*, but *Rabbenu ha qadosh*? And, when arresting Jesus, would they have called Him the Nazarene;

⁹⁹ Lods, *Israël*, p. 355.

that is, the Holy One? And would His enemies have accepted and kept the name if it had had such a meaning? Therefore we are not convinced by the suggestion of Guignebert and other similar ones. *Nazir* would have no other advantage than to contain the *z*, which is nearer than the *s* to the *ζ* of the Greek forms. But then it would be quite impossible to uphold and explain the *s* in *noṣeri*.

Since the word *nazir* is a perfect Hebrew word, Jesus and His disciples should have been called by a marvelous Hebrew word, *nezirim*. Philologically it is not permissible in any way to derive "Nazarene" from *nazir* because the term does not admit of an ending in *n*. True, there are words of the type of *nazir* that give rise to forms ending in *n*; thus, for instance, *sadiq* gives *sadqan* ("charitable"), but this term indicates a virtue inherent in the character of a person. *Nazir* is not a quality but an obligation spontaneously undertaken, and for a well-defined period of time: it is something we impose on ourselves, or something suggested to us by others; in short, it is something that comes from outside us and is not inherent in us, in our temperament. Meyer also excludes the possibility that "Nazarene" is derived from *nazir* ("consecrated to the Lord").

After collecting this avalanche of explanations, as learned as they are clever, but none of which entirely satisfies us, we wish to mention the simple declaration made by Lietzmann. After pointing out that in the first century the believers in Christ were called Christians¹⁰⁰ at Antioch, and that in Palestine they were called Nazarenes,¹⁰¹ and that Jesus Himself was known by this name, not only

¹⁰⁰ Acts 11:26.

¹⁰¹ Acts 24:5.

outside¹⁰² but also in the bosom of the Christian community itself,¹⁰³ he says: "The meaning of this appellative remains obscure."¹⁰⁴

Lastly, for curiosity's sake we should like to mention also some of the old etymologies and explanations of the words "Nazareth" and "Nazarene," and synonyms, which Wutz has collected in his *Onomastica sacra*.¹⁰⁵ "Nazaret: *flos aut virgultum aut separata aut custodita, sanctificata, coronata, . . . flos munditiae.*"¹⁰⁶ The Greek texts of the *Onomastica*, to which the Latin ones correspond, give *ἀκρεπών* or *ἀγναρπόν*. "Nazareus: *mundus, sanctus, vel abjunctus. Nazarei separati vel sanctificati sive floridi aut observantes vel flores aut coronati coronis.*" About the explantion of "Nazareus" as "set apart, pure," it should be noted that the *Onomastica* also explains the name of "Simon" by *mundus* for the following reason: Since "Simon" is identical with "Petrus," "Petrus" is derived from the Atamaic "pētar," ("to set apart"), "Petrus" means "set apart"; therefore "Simon" must mean "clean, pure." From this example we see how fragile are the foundations on which the etymologies of the *Onomastica* are based and how much those set out and quoted by us for the word "Nazareth" and "Nazarene" are to be taken *cum grano salis*. At the same time, however, they are there to prove that already in the bosom of the early Church the etymology of "Nazarene" occupied the

¹⁰² Acts 6:14; John 18:5, 7; 19:19; Luke 18:37; Matt. 2:23; 87:71.

¹⁰³ Acts 2:22; 3:6; 4:10; 6:14; 22:8; 26:9; Luke 24:19.

¹⁰⁴ Lietzmann, *Eglise ancienne*, p. 197.

¹⁰⁵ Wutz, *Onomastica sacra*, I, 376.

¹⁰⁶ *Flos* recalls the Hebrew *neṣer*; *separata* recalls *nator*; *custodita* recalls *nator*.

minds of scholars and, I may say, preoccupied them. Once only, as far as I have been able to ascertain, the *Onomastica* gives for *Ναζαρεῖος* besides the meaning *ἄγιος καὶ καθαρός* ("holy and pure"), also & *Ναζαρέτ*. Had the derivation from the town Nazareth been so simple and so sure, why the labor of so many powerful minds through so many centuries?

Those, however, who limit themselves to the idea that the appellative can be derived only from the name of the hamlet, have no defense against the many forms and endings and all the objections of various kinds raised by critics who take different lines. Those also who try to explain the appellative by an ethnic concept or by one of observance or of a nazare, never succeed in explaining the various forms and endings with a single argument, but need to group together two or three factors in order to escape as well as they can from the tangle of elements. We think that a theory can be considered satisfactory if with a single concept, a single word, it explains all the phenomena: the denomination, the etymology, the variety of forms and endings, the concomitant historical events.

Whether or not Nazareth existed *ab antiquo*, whether the name *Neser* ("bud") was given to Jesus, whether He was called a conserver, an observant (*nōsēr*), and whether He more or less belonged to some sect, or whether He became a *nazīr* ("abstainer"), one thing appears to us as certain: "Nazarene" is outside and, we should venture to add, above all these considerations.

The Jews at the time of Christ spoke Aramaic. The Greek terms for "Nazarene" must come from Aramaic, and the Aramaic term must be capable of endings that can explain entirely the variety of the Greek forms. So much for

the form. As for the content, "Nazarene" cannot be a term denoting quality, or place of family origin, or an *epitheton ornans*, that is, a title of honor; but must denote something above all admiration as well as above all enmity, something that forms the nucleus, the essence, of the work of Jesus and His disciples; something real, unmistakably true, supremely living, intimately bound up with the life, works, death, and glory of Jesus, indissolubly linked with the activity and labors of His apostles and disciples; it must be, as Guignebert would have it, "a title which expresses, so to speak, the essential nature of Jesus and of His function."¹⁰⁷

Well then, we think we are able to give to the term "Nazarene" a meaning that satisfies all these exigencies, that answers all these needs.

According to Louis Ginzberg,¹⁰⁸ *nesār*, which in Aramaic means generally "to twitter," in Syriac has the meaning of "to sing," "to declaim a poem." Worth noting is the passage of the Palestinian Talmud M 'aseroth 3, 10, 51 A, where we read, "Continue, *ṣōr ṣōr*," that is, "Continue declaiming." Ginzberg supposes that in Jer. 31:5¹⁰⁹ the word *nōsērīm* does not mean "watchers," but "singers, heralds."¹¹⁰ As we said before, Father Anastasio remarks

¹⁰⁷ Guignebert, *Jesus* (1906), p. 46 (to which Salvatorelli, *Nazareno*, refers, p. 2) who is of the opinion that the name "Nazarene" must be a designation expressing some characteristic of those to whom it referred.

¹⁰⁸ Ginzberg, "Beiträge zur Lexikographie des Jüdisch-Aramäischen," in MGWJ, 1934, fasc. 1, p. 22. See also our previous remarks on *nesar*, "to sing."

¹⁰⁹ Probably through a printer's error Ginzberg gives Jer. 31:6.

¹¹⁰ Holzmeister (in *Verbum Domini*, XVII [1937], 23) rightly defines as *implicata obiectio* the idea of W. B. Smith (*Der vorchristliche Jesus*, 1911, pp. 42-70) in explaining "Jesus Nazareus," the equivalent of *Jeshu hanōsērī*, as "Jesus custos." *Nōsērīm* in Jeremias is clearly enough a singer, an announcer, a prophet. The Talmudic form differs from the participle *nōsēr* ("one who observes, conserves, keeps"), from *nōsērī*, on the type of *moabhi*, *moabita*, in order to keep the two words distinct. The one who belongs to, or is the leader

that *neṣār* corresponds to the Hebrew *sifsef* ("to twitter"). I should like to point out that in a liturgical passage, anonymous but ancient and Oriental in origin, according to Samuel David Luzzatto in his *Introduzione al Mahāzōr* (cycle of prayer based on the Italian rite used in Rome), we read in the blessing given to the rabbis: "May the Lord accept the speech of your lips, the sweetness (nō'am) *noṣarkhem*." What can the latter term mean if not "your preaching"? From all these indications it is clear that *neṣār* may have the following meanings: "to twitter, to trill, to sing, to declaim." It must be remembered that the onomatopoeic root *ṣōr* which is reflected also in *ṣraṣar* ("cricket") admirably suits the ancient preachers, because they read the religious texts and then also explained them in their sermons, to the accompaniment of a melody.

In Ps. 48:4 we read: "My mouth shall speak wisdom: and the meditation of my heart understanding. I will decline my ear to a parable (*mashal*): I will open my proposition (*hidah*) upon the harp."¹¹¹ Hence we have no doubt that the psalm represents a declamatory oration accompanied by the sound of the harp. Referring to 1 Kings 16:18, the Midrash Ruth Rabbà IV, 3, says that David could play *bemiqra*, that is, at the reading of the biblical texts.

On this point we may note the following. Philo calls

of the prophet-orator, is not a *nōṣēr*, i.e., *cavus*, but belongs spiritually to the *nōṣērim*, is therefore a *nōṣēri*.

¹¹¹ The parable is a rhetorical form known as characteristic of the sayings of Christ; the term *hidah* constitutes an excellent parallel form to *mashal*, because the parable, too, has something of the riddle about it. On the terms mentioned, see the valuable work of Heinemann, *Altjüdische Allegoristik* (1936), pp. 14 ff. On the term *mashal*, see Eissfeldt, *Einführung in das A. T.* (1934), pp. 99 ff., Hempel, *Althebr. Litteratur*, pp. 44 ff., B. Gemser, *Sprüche Salomos* (1937), p. 7. Kurt Galli, *Biblisches Reallexikon*, (1937), p. 391, translates *kinnōr* by "Leierkasten" ("barrell organ").

doṣa "song," the prayer of thanksgiving recited at the offering of the basket containing the first fruits, because the use of modulated speech was, as Heinemann¹¹² rightly points out, common also among the Jews. The doctors of the Talmud never fail to recommend warmly the reading of the texts by declaiming them, by singing them. It is said in the Tr. Megillah 32 A: "Of him who reads (the Bible) without intoning and of him who reads the Mishnah without modulation, the verse of the Bible says: 'And I have given them laws that are not good.' " One does not taste the beauty of the law unless the prescription of reading it with modulation is observed. To avoid forgetting the Torah, Rabbi Aqiba, the famous doctor of the time of Emperor Hadrian, recommends the daily study of it, and more precisely, *zēmer behkōl jōm*, *zēmer behkōl jōm*, a song each day, a song each day.¹¹³ Note that the term *zēmer* means a song accompanied by a musical instrument. Without wishing to stress the question of instruments, one should observe that these words confirm the fact that the Bible was studied by singing each passage of it.

The same doctor speaks of the *ta 'amē ha-torāh*, of accents of the Torah, that is, of the signs to help intelligent reading. According to M. Z. Segal,¹¹⁴ the scribes (*soferim*) had already introduced the usage of reading Scripture with a kind of cantilena, "a sort of recitation in vogue among all the ancient peoples in the reading of their sacred

¹¹² Heinemann, *Philon's griechische und jüdische Bildung* (1929), p. 18. Heinemann considers the information on the melodic reading of the text about the first fruits one of the very few indications of Philo, which complete the material transmitted by Rabbinic literature (*ibid.*, p. 40).

¹¹³ T. B. Sanhedrin, 9a ff. Cf. S. Krauss, *Talmud. Archāol.*, III, 78, 86. St. Paul (1 Cor. 14:15): "I will sing with the spirit. I will sing also with the understanding."

¹¹⁴ See his penetrating study, *Letaledoth mesirath ha-miqra*, in the volume in honor of David Yellin, *Jerusalem* (1935), pp. 14 ff.

books." From this particular way of reciting we have the system of the *neginōth*, that is, of the musical accents, which have come down to our day. In Israel in the ancient times as also today, the success of a public prayer depends largely on the melody. Some modern doctors say of the formula of absolution from vows recited at the beginning of the Day of Atonement that, in spite of all objections to the contrary, it has been preserved, thanks to the poetry we feel, not in the dry and unimpressive text, but in the melody which accompanies it.¹¹⁵

Mandelstamm says: "The power of prayer resides in its melody." Bloch, speaking of the same text, remarks: "You hear only the melody." Between the cold literal meaning of the text and the reception it finds in the feeling of the crowds, there is a gulf.¹¹⁶ Nowadays in Eastern Europe, especially in Poland and Lithuania and, up to a few years ago, in Russia, the *darshān* or, as he is called in other provinces, the *maggid*, that is, the preacher, the narrator in public, uses an extremely rich variety of melodies and stresses in his oratory. Anyone who, like the present writer, has had the opportunity of witnessing these scenes and seeing how the crowd in ecstasy hangs on the orator's lips, knows that at times his voice grows tearful, the speech becomes a lament, a languid, saddening lullaby; at other times it grows fiery; and then the modulation becomes more animated and the rhythm faster, while the delivery more closely approaches singing. Several years ago in Jerusalem, on a moonlight night, my attention was attracted by a strong manly voice ringing in the distance; it

¹¹⁵ As is known, this melody has inspired the famous German musician Bruck in the composition "Kol nidre."

¹¹⁶ On this subject, see Wendel, *Gelübde*, p. 149.

was a popular orator who in the open air was commemorating the virtues of a dead man; the reading of a psalm was like a true and real song.¹¹⁷

Sapher¹¹⁸ says of the Jews that they are so precise in the rendering of musical accents in the biblical texts that the cantilena is already itself an interpretation. They have special melodies for the text of the Pentateuch, others for the prophetic passages, still others for hagiographies, and several more for the Book of Job, for Proverbs, and for the Psalms. Proper melodies are set for halakhic texts (legal norms) and others for the reading of the mystic *Book of Glory* (*Zohar*). The children learn these melodies even before they learn the alphabet. The teacher shows with his fingers the length and the tone of the notes. These signs, says Sapher, take the place of musical notes, written or printed. The Jews of the Yemen are quite unable to render a passage by heart without singing it. Children and grown-ups are alike in this respect.

Those who study more attentively the mode of life of the Jews of the Yemen on the whole easily discover that there we have pictured a very ancient type of life. At the center of Roman religion, says Giuseppe Graneria,¹¹⁹ there is an archaic cult, that of the Arvali brothers, which is akin to the mysteries and had an esoteric portion during which the priests, remaining alone in the temple, "scanned with a special rhythm a very ancient hymn."

The custom of reading and transmitting the ancient sacred texts and the ancient liturgical passages with a

¹¹⁷ On the songs which accompanied the reading of biblical and liturgical texts, see also Elbogen, *Gottesdienst*, pp. 171, 303 f.; Lewin, *Ozar ha-Ge'onim*, p. 106.

¹¹⁸ Iben Safer, pp. 55 ff.

¹¹⁹ Graneris, *La religione nella storia delle religioni* (1935), p. 54.

given intonation is still extant also outside Israel, as an age-old inheritance from the ancient East.¹²⁰ In the dissident Oriental rite there is not even now a Low Mass.

The prayers of the Mass are all recited in the usual tone characteristic of Oriental singing and with cadences in the second and third parts, which alternate between the celebrant and his assistant (*shammesh*, "server"). Orders that date back to Pope Leo XIII forbid any pressure on the members of the Oriental rites to induce them to embrace the Latin rite. "The Eastern liturgy admirably suits the Oriental mentality and represents a Christian patrimony of ancient tradition which is worthy of all esteem and honor."¹²¹

All these remarks agree fully with the philological data, according to which the same verb *nesār* that means "to trill, to twitter" takes in Syriac the meaning "to sing, to declaim a poem." Undoubtedly Jesus, the great speaker and the great man of prayer (not to mention the consideration of Father Jeusse on the subject, who tries to reconstruct the musical elements of the rabbinical preaching in the time of Christ) also followed the general custom when preaching and praying in public. The same is true of His disciples. Therefore our opinion is that Jesus and His disciples were given by all, friends, admirers, and enemies, and they themselves accepted the name "Nazarenes" which, derived from the root *nsr*, signified exactly "the preachers, the declaimers." The prophetic speeches, as Heinrich David Müller demonstrated in his day, are often

¹²⁰ From the doctrine supposedly written by a king in the time of the Middle Kingdom for his son Merikare, we learn that "the sapiential writings were sung with the teacher and the scholar" (see Ermann, *Die Religion der Aegyptier*, p. 160; Gemser, *Sprüche*, p. 14).

¹²¹ Harsteli, *Syrien und sein Libanon* (1926), p. 119.

in verse form, which, with the parallelism of the members characteristic of Old Testament poetry, reveals the poetic elements of many biblical passages. Evidently Jesus often achieves His success not by a simple reading of the prophetic passages, but by a modulated and richly interpretative reading.

To explain the two Greek forms *Naζαρηνός* and *Naζαραῖος* we can admit without demur that from the Aramaic word *naṣār*, with the meaning indicated by us, come the Aramaic forms *naṣrana* and *naṣora* ("preacher"). The first is formed on the type of *gamrana* ("teacher of tradition") from *gemar* ("to teach the traditional law"); the second on the type of *amorā* ("Amoreus"), meaning "teacher, doctor, he who explains." Both endings were taken by the names given to the learned and to those who taught in public. Since the appellative "Nazarene" holds also the concept of preacher and teacher,¹²² it could be used now with the one ending and now with the other. *Naṣrana* gave the Greek *Naζαρηνός* and *naṣora* gave *Naζαραῖος*.¹²³ After all, the two forms *Naζαρηνοὶ* and *Naζαραῖοι* can be equally explained only from the noun *naṣora*, its plural in the absolute being *naṣorain* hence *Naζαρηνοὶ* and in the emphatic form *naṣorajja* (hence *Naζαραῖοι*).¹²⁴

The Arabic form *naṣran* can be directly derived from the Aramaic *naṣrana*. The Syriac form *naṣraja* is, according to Meyer, a derivation from *Naζαρηνός* and *Naζαραῖος*.

¹²² In St. John's Gospel, 13:14, Christ says: "You call Me Master, and Lord; and you say well, for so I am."

¹²³ Jost, whose work is not at my disposal and to which Hoennicke (*Judentumchristentum*, p. 229) refers, seems to have already thought of a form *naṣ-r-nim*.

¹²⁴ As for the passing of the *s* of *nesār* to the *s* of the Greek forms, we have already noted that the case is frequent, especially where there is question of a word in which the *r* also occurs.

The Talmudic form *nōseri* is owing specially to the fact that the Aramaic *nesār*, technically meaning "declaim, preach," was in time assimilated with a common Hebrew verb *našōr*, "to preserve" (pres. part., *nōšēr*), that was on everyone's lips. Moreover, the form *nōseri* on the type of 'ammon·'ammoni (Ammonite) and *moab·boabhi* (Moabite) shows how in still later days the Talmudic Hebrewism meant with this term, not the one that observed the halakhic precepts, but the one that belonged to the group of Nazarenes.

Some persons point out that the name "Nazarene" should be considered a direct derivation from the Arabic *nasran*, because the Arabs are accustomed always to keep the popular native pronunciation, and that we find difficulty in explaining the reason why the Jews said *nōseri* rather than *nāseri* or *nāseran*. According to these authors the *a* of the Arabic form is of a greater value than the *o* of the Talmudic form. But, as can be seen from what has been said before, we do not derive the name "Nazarene" either from the Arabic *nasran* or from the Hebrew *nōseri*. In our opinion, we repeat, it comes directly from the Aramaic *naṣrana*. Furthermore, we should like to point out that in an investigation of this kind the vowels are themselves a factor to which we should not attribute too much importance, because in Hebrew the vowels, as it is known, were not fixed in writing until the seventh century of our era. That the vowels represent an unreliable element can easily be gathered from the passing of several geographical names from Hebrew or Aramaic into Greek: 'Amora becomes Gomorra, Bela' becomes Balla, Sedōm becomes Sodoma. An ancient Semitic long *a* becomes an *o* in the language of Canaan; thus *rāšu-rosh* ("head"), *tabh-tobh*

("good").¹²⁵ Cohen,¹²⁶ in support of his contention, which we are unable to accept, according to which the Talmudic name *nōseri* is derived directly from the geographical name, brings forward various cases in which the *vāmes*, that is, the long *a* of Hebrew, at a certain period was pronounced in Palestine as *o*. This change, ascertained by a whole series of facts, is traceable also elsewhere; thus, for example, some Egyptian proper names with a long *a* are pronounced in Coptic with *o* or even *u*. There are cases where the long *a* of an Arabic geographical name becomes *o* in Hebrew, and this *o* is transcribed in the Babylonian Talmud by the *waw*. The name of the Palestinian city *Jafo* is transcribed by the Septuagint *Ιωπην*.¹²⁷ To the examples quoted by Cohen there should be added, we think, the change from *jad* ("hand") into *jod* (the tenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet). The changeableness in the way of pronouncing the vowels in Hebrew is made clear also by the following examples. The formula of absolution from vows, which begins the Vesper service of Kippur, is pronounced everywhere *kōl-nidrē*, strong groups of Sephardic Jews tenaciously read *kal nidre*. And this happens with an expression that has always been in a Jewish setting, while in the case of *nōseri* we are dealing with a word that has lived for centuries in the speech of the Jews but, because of the interest in the subject, has been subjected to a Greek translation, an Arabic translation, and so on. Finally, whatever the vocalization may be, what is of interest is to form a clear concept, even hypothetical, of the real meaning of the word "Nazarene."

¹²⁵ Bauer and Leander, *Hist. Grammatik der hebr. Sprache des A. T.*, 1922, p. 18.

¹²⁶ Cohen, *Punktationsysteme*, p. 394.

¹²⁷ Jonas 1:3.

To the Jewish masses Jesus and His disciples, notwithstanding the terms "rabbi" and "rabboni" (teacher), that from time to time are found in the Gospel,¹²⁸ could not represent the typical doctors and teachers of the Mishnah. To the masses they were preachers, either when they read in declamatory tones the prophetic passages, or when in moving tones and modulated voice they interpreted them. It is known that in conformity with the custom of the apostles, the synagogues were used by the early Christians as a valuable opportunity for propaganda. Says Elbogen,¹²⁹ they acted as "celebrants in religious services and as preachers."¹³⁰ But the masses did not confound the preach-

¹²⁸ Mark 9:8; 10:51; John 1:38; Luke 5:3. For the complicated question of the use of the title "rabbi" and its synonyms in the time of Christ, see Gratz, IV, 398, and Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, I, 916 ff. Dalman deals at length with it (*Worte*, I, 278-80). Contrary to the position taken by Gratz, who seems to us too trenchant, and contrary to Dalman, who, in his desire to prove the exactness of the events contained in the Gospel, appeals to the Gospel itself, we hold that *abb* ("father"), as a title given to a priest or person of authority in the realm of things spiritual (on the Aramaic term *abba*, corresponding to the Hebrew *abb*, see Meyer, *Ersprung*, III, 236) as also *rabb*, etymologically close to the Latin word *magister*, came into use among the people in ancient times. *Abb* as a synonym of *kohen* occurs already in Judg. 17:10; *rabb* as an appellative to indicate the teacher is used at least a century before Christ. And it is, therefore, we think, a risky thing to fix today with exactitude, as Gratz would have it, the period when the word *rabb* ("teacher") or *rabbi* ("my master") became an official title, the more so since information on this subject belongs to the Geonim period. If it is indeed true that, as an official title, it belongs to a period later than that of Christ, it must be admitted that in the time of Christ it was known and used in everyday speech. The disciples, calling Christ by the name of *Rabbi*, and Christ telling them not to let themselves be called *Rabbi* (Matt. 23:8) may have been thinking of an honorary title existing in their day without its having any official character.

¹²⁹ Elbogen, *Gottesdienst*, p. 252.

¹³⁰ That preaching was the characteristic of the Nazarenes is also proved, we think, by the following episode. When St. Paul is brought before the Roman governor Felix and is accused by the Jews, he says: "There are but twelve days since I went up to adore in Jerusalem. And neither in the Temple did they find me disputing with any man or causing any commotion of the people; neither in the synagogues nor in the city." According to Acts 24:5 Tertullus in his revolt against Paul in the name of the Jews of Jerusalem, calls the Christians "the sect of the Nazarenes" (*ἡ αἵρεις τῶν Ναζαριῶν*). Now, given that this

ing of Christ with the teaching of the rabbis, so true is it that while some were totally captivated by His words, evidently quite exceptional, others would feel impelled to cast Him out of their sight,¹³¹ indubitably the contents of His sermons, coupled with a stirring delivery, awakened the admiration of some and the anger of others, and no one saw in Him one of the many doctors of the Mishnah, but the exponent of a teaching absolutely peculiar to Him, for whom a very distinctive appellative was necessary. Though the rabbis taught with a given modulation of the voice (as is still the custom in Palestine and in the Talmudic academies of Poland), yet the oratory of Jesus was absolutely original and proceeded from a source that could belong to no other. The force of His eloquence was in the *exousia*.¹³²

Moreover, He announced the proximate coming of the kingdom of heaven on earth; He was conscious of an exceptional mission that had to be fulfilled in the sight of the people and of all humanity. These were states of mind, ideas, and convictions that others did not possess. These peculiarities find expression in His oratory as regards either contents or form, an oratory which exercised a special fascination on the masses. When, on the last day of the feast of Tabernacles, Jesus, rising, exclaims: "If any man

is an act of public accusation formally made, it is difficult to admit that the hostile thrust could contain a reference to the place of origin of the founder of the sect; the desire was rather to attack the activity of the sect, i.e., preaching. According to John 9:19 the writing placed by Pilate over the cross read, "Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews." The epithet used must evidently indicate, like the expression "King of the Jews," the manifest guilt of Jesus, guilt which could not have existed in His family's having originated in Nazareth, but in His own public activity, i.e., in the preaching of a doctrine in many ways diametrically opposed to that followed by the people.

¹³¹ Luke 4:29.

¹³² See the next chapter.

thirst, let him come to Me and drink, as the Scripture says: He that believeth in Me, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living waters."¹²³ many of those present began to say: "This is the Prophet indeed; others said: "He is the Christ"; others are left in doubt because Christ was to come from Judea. Nevertheless the guards sent by the priests have not the courage to arrest the speaker. To the question, "Why have you not brought Him?" they answered: "No man ever spake like this man."¹²⁴

This episode is an echo of the impression left on the masses by the discourses of Christ. For this His contemporaries, who gathered in crowds in the squares, on the highways, on the shores of the lakes, to hear Him, could not escape the need to give Him a totally new and unmistakable epithet. The rabbinic teaching more often than not, drew its inspiration from questions of pure casuistry, or aimed at expounding narratives on the haggadic model. Christ neither touches legal matters nor tells stories, but preaches a distinctive doctrine peculiar to Himself and conquers the masses with the fire of His words and of His sacred enthusiasm. If in the Gospel there is no mention of declamation simply because this form of exposition was no novelty to those accustomed to hear the rendering of the sacred texts in song, we should not exclude the fact that Jesus and His disciples made use of declamation too. And if this same title of disclaimer is not given to the rabbis it is due to the fact that their declamatory art must have been of less importance than the text.¹²⁵

¹²³ This saying of Jesus does not use a biblical text but takes its inspiration from the rite of the libations of water on the altar. The nearest text in every way is Isa. 55:1 ff.

¹²⁴ John 7:46.

¹²⁵ In rabbinical literature it is said that the voice of the translator into

Moreover, the doctors, even when declaiming, were not used to expressing thoughts that could impress the masses. They always taught by a deductive method, and were very scrupulous in giving for every quotation the name of the teacher who had spoken it; indeed at times they would give out a long string of names. Christ, on the contrary, does not refer to any earlier doctor; He pours His new wine into new bottles; and with Him the novelty of the contents is associated with an altogether personal oratory. With none of the doctors of the Talmud is the oratory so incomparably superior to the traditional teaching as with Jesus. The oratory of Jesus is of a prophetic character, an eloquence that belonged to ages past. He is found in glorious isolation, His teaching has all the character of prophecy, He gives the vivid impression of uniqueness.

The people, who at all times call Him by the name of Rabbi, do, however, readily term Him "Preacher." The insignificant hamlet, Nazareth, existed at the time of Christ, but it was not known to everyone, while on the consciousness of vast numbers of people the uniqueness of this flaming preaching was impressed. The personality of the Preacher was far above the obscurity of the place of origin of His family. Jesus was for the crowds not the Nazarethanus, but the Nazarene, the "Preacher."

Many orthodox Jews have beside the rabh, the rabbi, who is the local teacher and arbiter in ritual questions, another teacher, who often goes from one community to another, who is charged with nothing but preaching, and

Aramaic of the biblical texts chosen by the reader was never to reach the pitch of song, so as not to obscure the importance of the biblical text. This fully confirms that the divine office in the time of Christ raised the art of declamation to the level of song (see Dalman, *Jesus-Jeshua*, p. 39).

to whom is given the title of *maggid*, the narrator.¹²⁶ He is not the authority whose teaching is a guide for practical life, but he is the man who with irresistible power draws the masses to himself by his popular oratory, ornamented with parables, with graceful *meshalim*.¹²⁷ It is enough to think of the famous R. Jaáqobh Kranz, who is the *maggid* par excellence, and whose parables still live in the heart of the countless Jews and in modern Jewish literature.¹²⁸ The *maggid* takes his name from the Hebrew *haggadah* (announcement). The explanations were originally of a halakhic¹²⁹ character more often than not, and only later they adopted a new conversational tone, that is haggadic properly so called.¹³⁰ The term *maggid* was therefore not sufficient to define the peculiarity of the preaching of Christianity in the earliest phase of its development. Nor was the verb *limmēd* ("to teach"), which in Talmudic terminology generally means "to deduce a norm of legal character,"¹³¹ exactly suited to the Christian preaching. In all these different activities of the spirit it was the case of applying given scholastic rules in order to deduce from them halakhic rules, and these rules were at times put at the service of the imposing edifice of the *haggadā*. The characteristic of the teaching of Jesus on the contrary was not, as Dalman¹³² rightly points out, an interpretation,

¹²⁶ On *maggid*, see the lexicon *Osar Jisrael*, Vol. IV (1924), p. 93.

¹²⁷ The *Osar Jisrael* notes that the prophets and the authors of the *Hagiographia* preached to the people, filled with holy zeal, like the preachers of today, called *maggidim*.

¹²⁸ The verb *ngd* has the meaning "to flow, to flow into, to attract." It is a word that attracts, that moves.

¹²⁹ Halakhah from *halakh*, "to go," means "rule for praxis."

¹³⁰ It is the conversation that is developed, drawn out and made attractive.

¹³¹ From this the term "Talmud."

¹³² Dalman, *Jesus-Jeschua*, p. 50.

but the reference to a fact which is not considered as an explanation, but as a fulfillment. And this fact "was the Christ Himself."

The verb "to teach" (*διδάσκειν*, corresponding to the Aramaic *allēf*)¹³³ is also used with reference to the sermons of Jesus. The proclamation in public, *κηρύσσειν*, has its equivalent in the Aramaic *karōg*, *κῆρυξ*, which is the call of the priest, of the Levite, and of the Israelite to divine office. The "bringing of the good tidings" (*εὐαγγελίζειν*), corresponds to the Aramaic *basēr* ("to announce"), which in Talmudic literature means after all "to announce" good tidings as well as bad tidings. But what could have been the term fit to define in Aramaic the preaching of Christ and His disciples, and to render the impression that it must have made on the Jewish masses? What could have been the equivalent of the expression *λαλεῖν περὶ τῆς Βασιλείας τοῦ θεοῦ*, which is found once in Luke and which, besides meaning "to speak, to reason," could undoubtedly have the figurative meaning of "producing agreeable musical sounds"? To us the most fitting term is exactly the Aramaic *nesar*.

The preaching of early Christianity was an exposition in a loud, sonorous, and pleasing voice of the good tidings that the days are come, that the announcement of Isaías and of the chapter read by Jesus in the synagogue of Nazareth are becoming a reality, that according to the words of Isaías "the year of grace of the Lord" is about to begin. The proclamation of the fulfillment of time and of the beginning of the year of grace prophesied by Isaías could not be

¹³³ The verb *ll*, according to the variety of the forms, takes the meanings, "to get the habit of, to learn to teach."

made through the customary meandering of logical deduction,¹⁴⁴ scrutinizing the contents of every word, as was done for halakhic ends. Such a proclamation could only be made in a form of declamatory eloquence. And for declamatory eloquence the exact Aramaic term then in use was *nesar*. By a process of elimination one must come to the conclusion that the most suitable term to cover in all its peculiarities the preaching of Christ and of His disciples is "Nazarene."

In the terminology used to distinguish the different ways of expounding the contents of the word of the Old Testament, the people, we think, with the sound instinct that guides them, found spontaneously the most appropriate definition. It was the Jewish masses and not Christ or His disciples who created the appellative "Nazarene," who chose this definition which expressed the distinctive character in which He showed Himself to the people. The disciples themselves had not yet, especially during Jesus' lifetime, a clear conception of what was essential in His mission. They supposed Him to be a Messiah destined to regain the independence of the nation, the kingdom of Israel. This is proved by the passage in Acts 1:6. While the disciples are with the risen Jesus, they ask Him: "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" Evidently they expect the coming to have some political national significance, too. In Luke 24:19 we must note the following passage in the talk of the two disciples on the road to Emmaus. They tell the risen Christ, whom they had not recognized as Jesus the Nazarene, that He was a prophet mighty in work and word before God and all the people. And they said: "But we hoped

¹⁴⁴ That is, the hermeneutical rules called *middoth* ("measures, modes").

that it was He that should have redeemed Israel; and now besides all this, today is the third day." The crowds on the other hand, saw before them a group of men preaching in the synagogues and in the public squares with moved and moving eloquence, proclaiming new ideas such as the renewing of the world and the beginning of the kingdom of God. The gathering of the attentive crowds was motivated for each individual by the presence of the "Preacher," the Nazarene, and of the preachers. The appellative must thus have sprung up almost inadvertently, because we cannot admit, as Loisy supposes, that the epithet had arisen in an artificial manner,¹⁴⁵ with the intention of wiping out the previous connections between Jesus and the Baptist sect. Similar denominations which are born at one flashing moment to go on for centuries and millenniums, do not spring up, in our view, except in a wholly natural manner, in the same way as a flower blossoms out of the ground by the action of a vital force. The name "Nazarene" applied to Jesus because of His eloquent and stirring oratory, was in reality a positive fact and has therefore found opened before it the minds and hearts of successive generations and the pathways of history.

Dalman will find in the above explanation and deduction an answer to his query: Is it perhaps that the word *Naζωραῖος* has come through the influence of an Aramaic word *nasora*?¹⁴⁶ Halevy and Father Anastasio will find the confirmation that the name "Nazarite" derives from *nasora*, meaning "prophet, singer of hymns," without recourse to the sect of the Mandaeans to explain the name of Jesus the Nazarene. Goguel also may be convinced that

¹⁴⁵ Loisy, *Christianisme*, p. 85.

¹⁴⁶ Dalman, *Itinéraires*, p. 88.

Naζωραῖος is indeed linked to the Syriac *nasora*, meaning "prophet, singer of hymns," but that the name was not worked out for the glorification of Jesus,¹⁴⁷ but only to indicate His specific activity as declaimer and preacher. Lagrange will find support for his idea that *Naζωραῖος* is a *nomen agentis*.¹⁴⁸ Our explanation may also constitute a solid etymological foundation for Loisy's affirmation¹⁴⁹ that Jesus in the common tradition of the Gospel is, as John the Baptist before Him, and His Christian disciples after Him, an itinerant preacher.

Guignebert will find expressed in the appellation given to Jesus the very function that he has deduced. As John, thanks to the nature of his work, so did Jesus pass into history, because of the activity displayed in His life, with the name of Nazarene. The *nebhiim*, prophets in words of sorrow and tears, foretell to Israel the punishment and the coming of the Messianic kingdom at the end of time; the *nošerim*, in words alive with ringing music, preach the coming of the kingdom of God.¹⁵⁰

Someone might still ask why Jesus, considered as seer, preacher, teacher, was not given one of those titles usually applied to such persons. We can answer these questions, too, without altering our interpretation of "Nazarene."

The name given to the prophets of the Old Testament (*nabhi*) came from the Babylonian *nabu* at the time when Israel was under the Babylonian influence and took place of the Jewish *roch* and *hozeh* ("seer"). It was not fitting to

¹⁴⁷ Goguel, *Jésus*, p. 175.

¹⁴⁸ Lagrange, *La gnose madeline*, p. 499.

¹⁴⁹ Loisy, *op. cit.*, p. 86.

¹⁵⁰ We have examined a series of passages from the Gospels in which "Nazarene" occurs in the various corresponding forms in Greek; all, we think, agree with the meaning "preacher, declaimer."

give the exponent of a new movement a title already exhausted and no longer in common use, since the Jews were now speaking Aramaic. Jesus might always have been simply called *rabh*, "teacher, doctor," but He was different from all those who bore this title, because He not only taught, but preached to the crowds in the Temple and in the public squares. And as in the case of the *nabhi* of the Old Testament, there existed, alongside the usual term, another, *mattif*¹⁵¹ to be precise, which threw into relief His stirring eloquence, so did the oratory of Jesus call for specific definition. He might have been called *darshān*, "seeker, preacher," but He was more than the ordinary *darshanim* because He did not go on repeating ideas already dealt with by others, but expressed His own original ideas, which in many respects stood out from those of His day. According to Dalman¹⁵² too, the title of *darshān* was not suitable to the preaching of Jesus and His disciples, because the term means "to search the content of the word of Scripture" in order to deduce from it its importance for practical use. The name that really was His and distinguished Him from all others, and which most probably sprang up spontaneously from the living speech of the time, was "Nazarene," because His own real province was declamatory preaching, the flaming word delivered in a loud, resounding voice, rhythmically cadenced, reaching the hearts of His hearers.

Jesus of Nazareth is Jesus the Nazarene, He is the *flos* foreseen by Isaias, He is, as Petrarch would say, *flos vatum*, "the flower of the prophets."

¹⁵¹ The term derives from the root *nabîf* ("to drip") and occurs in Amos 7:16 and Mich. 2:6.

¹⁵² Dalman, *op. cit.*, pp. 49 ff.

Hence Harnack says about the eloquence of Jesus Christ: "Jesus taught that it is no profit to gain the whole world if the soul suffer harm, and yet He kept a friendly feeling to every living thing. . . . His sayings, usually set in comparisons and proverbs, express all the shades of human speech and the whole gamut of feelings. He employs the sternest accents of impassioned denunciation and wrathful feeling and irony, although these tones must have been the exception. Mourning and tears, laughter and dancing, riches and poverty, hunger and thirst, health and sickness, children's playing and the politics of state, . . . an inn and the payment for lodging, weddings and funerals, the luxurious dress of the living and the tombs of the dead, . . . the vinedresser in the vineyard and the idle workers in the market place, the shepherd looking for his lost sheep, the pearl merchant, . . . the housewife's anxiety on account of the flour, the leaven, or the lost drachma, the widow's plea before the merciless judge, . . . the intellectual relations of teachers and pupils, . . . the glamor of royalty, the ambition of the powerful, the innocence of children, the ready alacrity of servants—all these figures appear in the Savior's discourses and make them dramatic. The supernatural world in which Jesus lived did not destroy the present world for Him, but led Him wholly to God."¹⁵²

So much for the eloquence of the Redeemer in general. What is distinctive about His preaching is the *exousia*.

¹⁵² L. C. Fillion, *The Life of Christ*, II, 643.

CHAPTER III

Exousia

THE greatness of a people is not measured by the greatness of their conquests, by the number of the nations they have subjected to their rule, by the vastness of the land they have occupied, the number of enemies they have slain and the people they have exterminated, but by the greatness of the sufferings they have themselves endured and by the spiritual gain born of suffering. From this point of view Israel is a great people. The greatness of their sufferings shines in the majesty of their Messianism. The soul of Israel was reaching out toward the future and lived and glimpsed and prophesied more and better than is commonly believed, more and better than it believed even itself. The words of the prophecies, however noble and elevated they may be, appear at times inferior to the spirit that animates them. Words are an alabaster bowl: the spirit shines through them and makes of them beacons of light. The spirit that animates these words is a white inexhaustible light. It shines through centuries, through millenniums, enlightens the mind and warms the hearts of countless generations. They are a perpetual source of wisdom and all are—and those that are not today shall be tomorrow—itinerant carriers of that great light that the Lord has lit in the souls of the seers of Israel.

The greatest of the Old Testament prophets is Isaias, who started his ministry in 738. He is the eyewitness of the organizing, economic, and military activity of King Ozias (789-738). In calling Isaias to the ministry of prophecy, the Lord foretells to him that he will have to experience the unconquerable incomprehension of Israel, which will go on "until the cities be wasted, without inhabitants and the houses without men and the land left desolate, and the Lord shall remove men far away, and solitude shall possess the land. And if there shall be still a tithing therein it shall again be laid waste by fire." Like the turpentine tree or the oak that even fallen preserves its roots, a holy seed is its root.

Desolation and Messianic light. Desolation in the field of politics, enemy invasion and exile, few are they who will survive the times thus foretold, which will be the consequence of a today marked by great wealth, by the excessive luxury of those who have to the greater misery of those who have not, by the cult of false gods. After the dark period of the purification, a new light will shine. In that day, all radiant with Messianic hopes, "the bud of the Lord shall be in magnificence and glory, and the fruits of earth shall be high and a great joy to them that shall have escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass that everyone that shall be left in Sion and that shall remain in Jerusalem shall be called holy: everyone that is written in life in Jerusalem" (Isa. 4:2 f.).

The brown earth shrouded in the mourning of nameless calamities and stained with the blood of numberless victims, the modest handful of the survivors of Israel (*nesure* Israel, who in the often repeated message of Isaias are merely that faithful minority, saved from the national

shipwreck and sharers in the good of the restored Messianic era),¹ the modest handful of the humble, who, according to the word of the prophets, shall rejoice in the Lord and shall exult in the Holy One of Israel, shall preserve a holy seed, a holy bud. From that soil shall grow out that pure flower, the child destined to be a promise to the people, He who shall be called the Prince of Peace.² And the prophet himself and his sons are elevated to the significance of symbols, are a "sign and a portent in Israel."³

Isaias contemplates with the eyes of the spirit Him that is destined by the Lord to be called the Servant of the Lord, the Man of Sorrows in the act of a voluntary and efficacious expiation, to be a light to the Gentiles and to bring "with the immortal principles of truth and justice" a well-being above all earthly well-being.

Servant of God. And like Him, and with Him all peoples at all times shall serve the Lord: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse and a flower (*neser*, a branch, green and resplendent) shall rise up out of his root."⁴ A Messianic promise. The Lord shall again be the keeper, *neser*, of Israel.⁵ He shall bring peace to His people.⁶ "In days to come, Jacob shall put forth a root,

¹ A. Vaccari, "I vaticini del 'Servo di Jahve' di Isaias," from *La Redenzione* (IV Settimana Biblica), p. 26. Garofalo notes: "The idea of the remnant (of Israel) is found in the old as well as in the new economy, the cornerstone of the tragedy and of the glory of Israel, the certainty of the whole human race, of which Israel was the chosen part, in the justice and mercy of God."

² On the Messianic names in Isaias, see Ogara, "Et vocabitur nomen ejus Emmanuel" in *Verbum Domini*, XVII (1937), 3-9.

³ See Zolli, "I fanciulli nel simbolismo di Isaias" in *Religio* (1938), pp. 179-91; Salvatore Garofalo, "La nozione profetica del 'Resto di Israele'"; in *Teologia del Vecchio Testamento*, Rome, Lateranum, new ser., 8th year, nos. 1-3, Faculty of Theology of the Pontifical Lateran Athenaeum, Rome, 1942, p. 81.

⁴ Isa. 11:1.

⁵ *Ibid.*, v. 6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, v. 5.

Israel shall blossom, shall bud out and shall cover the face of the earth with its fruits."⁷ The root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign.⁸ Him shall the Gentiles and the remnant of Israel beseech, and all the nations shall flow toward the hill of the Lord, toward the house of the God of Jacob, and shall prostrate themselves before the Lord on the holy mountain, in Jerusalem. "And a path and a way shall be there and it shall be called the holy way"; "the unclean shall not pass over it; and this shall be unto you a straight way so that fools shall not err therein. No lion shall be there, nor shall any mischievous beast go up by it nor be found there; but they shall walk there that shall be delivered. And the redeemed of the Lord shall return and shall come into Sion with praise; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head. They shall obtain joy and gladness."⁹

Micheas, a contemporary and countryman of Isaias, took no active part in the politics of his day, but with a vast experience of the abuses of the rich landowners against the tillers of the soil, attacked those that were enjoying themselves, threatening divine punishment and promising comfort to the oppressed with promises of a superior well-being; yet fights and hopes for a better present and a glorious future of the theocracy, trying to re-establish the disturbed equilibrium in the individual and in the social order. Even where the words of the prophet sound bitter and severe, even in a sky darkened by threatening clouds, a ray of light shines suddenly: the announcement through the hurling of reproofs, that God will gather Israel from

⁷ *Ibid.*, v. 6.

⁸ Isa. 11, for the meaning of *nes*, see A. Bea in *Biblica*, XXI (1940), 195.

⁹ Isa. 35.

exile in which it shall be scattered, and will bring it back to its possession.¹⁰

"I will assemble all of thee, O Jacob; I will bring together the remnant of Israel. I will put them together as a flock in the fold, as the sheep in the midst of the sheep cotes. . . . For he shall go up that shall open the way before them. They shall divide and pass through the gate and shall come in by it; and their king shall pass before them, and the Lord at the head of them."

There is no doubt, says Closen,¹¹ that the idea of king and the judge predominates in the Messianic picture of the Old Alliance. However, the serene visions of Bethlehem and Nazareth are not wholly extraneous to the Messianic belief of the time of preparation.

After a long wise meditation on different ways of understanding the figure of the Servant of God in the book of Isaias, that is, on the collective interpretation (the people of Israel) and the individual one (King Ezechias, the Messiah), Eisfeldt concludes that the two opposing interpretations "converge nevertheless in what properly forms the essence of the poems, especially of the last one. . . . Both bow to the idea, there clearly expressed, that suffering and death are not the divine sentence against those that suffer it, that, on the contrary, the man or the people thus tested may be nearer to God than other more fortunate ones, and that perhaps that man or that people has not suffered for others, both agree that such doctrine marks directly a turning point in the history of humanity. Both with equal piety are silent before the fact that six

¹⁰ Garofalo, *op. cit.*, p. 102.

¹¹ Gustavo E. Closen, *Incontro con il Libro Sacro, Elevazioni su idee religiose fondamentali dell' Antico Testamento*, Brescia, Marcelliana, 1943, p. 165.

centuries later a Man walked on this earth, whose virtue and passion, death and resurrection, wonderfully and mysteriously explained the songs of Ebed, and in turn revealed to posterity all the depths of their contents.”¹²

Father Closen takes as the subject of one of his meditations the text of Micheas, chapter 5: “And thou, Bethlehem Ephrata, art a little one among the thousand of Juda: out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be the ruler (*mōshēl*) in Israel. Therefore will He give them up even till the time wherein she that travaileth shall bring forth; and the remnant of His brethren shall be converted to the children of Israel. And He shall stand and feed in the strength of the Lord in the height of the name of the Lord his God. And they shall be converted, for now shall He be magnified even to the end of the earth. And this man shall be our peace (*shalom*).”¹³

Bethlehem, little Bethlehem, is taken as the birthplace of the Messianic child. And perhaps in no other prophecy of the Old Testament era is the Messiah so humanly near to us. He has a country of His own, a native city, a place of birth like all other men. And further, the fact that the Messiah has an earthly home, a native city, which from then onward shall be His city, is so important before the infinite majesty of God, that more than seven centuries earlier—and here the thought of Closen coincides with that of Eisfeldt—He inspires one of His prophets to foretell the birthplace of the Messiah, mentioning it by name.

¹² O. Eisfeldt, *Der Gottesknecht bei Deuterojesaja*, Halle, 1933, pp. 25-27; cf. Vaccari, *op. cit.*, pp. 33 ff.

¹³ *Shalom* (“peace, salvation”), which recalls the “Prince of Peace” in the prophecies of Isaia. He, the Messiah, will be Peace: “*Ipse per excellentiam . . . Pax appellatur* (Mich. 5:5), *non aliter atque cum se conspiciendum in N. T. praeberuit, simul et Lux et Veritas et Vita et Pax nostra nuncupabitur*” (Ogara, *op. cit.*, p. 7).

In the prophecy of Micheas just mentioned we must note the meaning of *bē-'ōz* and of *bigōn*, which some translate “in virtue of the power of the Lord,” “in the fullness of the majesty of the name of the Lord”; others translate it “in the power of the Lord, in the sublime name of the Lord, His God,” in conformity with the saying of the Septuagint, *εἰς τιχίαν*. The Latin rendering: “*in fortitudine Domini, in sublimitate nominis Dei sui*.”¹⁴

There remains for us to see what is the meaning of *'ōz* in the passage of Micheas and if in the particle *be* and *bi* there is an instrumental or local *beth*. The Arabic *ada* (*conjugit ad Deum*), *'ud* (“to seek refuge”); *'ōz* in biblical language means physical force, power, consciousness of power. In I Kings 2:10 the Lord gives power, *'ōz*, to His King and He exalts the splendor (the power, the horn) of His Messiah. According to Ps. 28:10 the Lord gives *'ōz* to His people, the Lord blesses the people with peace. The power conferred is not an aggressive, a destructive force. Far from it; it is made manifest in peace. Ps. 85:15 ff.: “Thou, O Lord, art a God of compassion and merciful; patient and of much mercy. Oh, look upon me, . . . give Thy *'ōz* to Thy servant.” Here it means help, salvation. The prayer goes on: Show me a token (prodigy) for good that they who hate me may see and be confounded (and not destroyed), because Thou, O Lord, hast helped me and hast comforted me. The benevolence of the Lord confers *'ōz* (Ps. 29). At other times we read: Blessed is the man that has his *'ōz* (power, strength) in Thee.

The Lord is called “rock of refuge” (*ma'oz*), which is found along with “God of thy salvation” (Isa. 17), in op-

¹⁴ This version is found in the Roman Breviary; on this see Closen, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

position to the fortified city (*ibid.*, v. 9) which proves to be a valueless defense.

Evidently it is a question of a power of this kind in Micheas 5. The Messiah will feed His flock, thanks to, in virtue of, the power that shall be given Him, in virtue of the majesty of the Lord. It is the case of a moral force that will bear on all, because all understand and feel it to be a reflection of the divine power and will. In short, we are dealing with a concept akin to that of the *exousia*, which occupies a very important place in the New Testament.

Jesus has in mind this *exousia*, this power given Him by God, when in John 10:27-29 He says: "My sheep hear My voice; and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them life everlasting, and they shall not perish forever. And no man shall pluck them out of My hand. That which My Father hath given Me is greater than all, and no one can snatch them out of the hand of My Father. I and the Father are one."

At this point we may put aside the term *exousia*; it is enough to have mentioned the concept that gives us the position which the Redeemer assumes in the setting in which He found Himself. His is an authority that comes from the authorization of the Father with whom the Redeemer is one. This attitude involves a juridical norm that recurred on the lips of the rabbis and recurs also in the New Testament, and that is still valid, the norm according to which the legate possesses the same power as the one who sent him. The will and the power of God and of Jesus are one indissoluble unity.

A delegated power of this kind is *exousia*. The *exousia* of Jesus is based also on the love of the Father, the love that the Redeemer enjoys as a compensation for the spon-

taneity of His sacrifice, free in the sacrifice of Himself, therefore entirely free. And this freedom becomes thus an essential element of the *exousia* of Jesus (John 10:17 ff.).

The victory over Satan, the accuser (Apoc. 12:11), signifies the salvation and the power (*dynamis*) and the kingdom of God and the *exousia* of His Messiah. Satan has been conquered by Jesus, and therein lies "our brothers" witness and promptness to the sacrifice of their lives—here we have the full use of *martyros* (witness and martyr). The Lord is omnipotent, the spirit of evil has been conquered, and it is thus that the power of Christ is in its full splendor. To God belongs the *dynamis*, to Jesus the *exousia*, which appears harmonized with the *dynamis*. This fusion is owing to the love of the Father who, for the love of Jesus, will accept the prayers of those who have loved Jesus. The disciples—this much they are told at the hour of separation—will from now onwards direct their prayers to the Father in the name of Jesus, and those prayers will be heard. The name is the hypostasis of the person that bears it. The name of Jesus remains endowed with efficacious free moral power, with *exousia*.

The consciousness and the idea of *exousia* in the mind of the Redeemer are thus manifested with insuperable clarity and beauty in the prayer of Jesus at the hour of separation (John 17).

"These things Jesus spoke; and lifting up His eyes to heaven, He said: Father, the hour is come, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son may glorify Thee. As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He may give eternal life to all whom Thou hast given Him. Now this is eternal life: that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent. I have glorified Thee on the earth,

I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do. And now glorify Thou Me, O Father, with Thyself, with the glory which I had before the world was, with Thee. I have manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou hast given Me out of the world. Thine they were; and to Me Thou gavest them. And they have kept Thy word. Now they have known that all things which Thou hast given Me are from Thee; because the words which Thou gavest Me, I have given to them. And they have received them and have known in very deed that I came out from Thee. And they have believed that Thou didst send Me. I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them whom Thou hast given Me; because they are Thine. And all My things are Thine, and Thine are Mine. And I am glorified in them. And now I am not in the world, and these are in the world, and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep them in Thy name whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one as We also are."

With reference to "power" that recurs in this seraphic prayer, Father Huby remarks: "The incarnate Word has received from the Father power over all humanity: beneficent power, bestower of life."¹⁵

Jesus solemnly affirms in the presence of the high priest that He has been given the Messianic dignity (Mark 14:61 f.); in reply to the question of John the Baptist the same affirmation is made in Matt. 11:2, 6. Jesus is greeted by the crowds as the "Son of David," that is, as the Messiah (Mark 11:10). Jesus represents the culminating point in the history of Israel (Matt. 13:16; Luke 10:29 f.). Since, however, the idea of the Messianic mission for Jesus is other than

¹⁵ Joseph Huby, *Le discours de Jésus après la cène*, Paris, 1932, p. 128.

that of the Messiah expected by the people, Jesus defines Himself as the "Son of man."

Jeremias feels predestined to be a prophet—the act of predestination is accomplished before his birth—and, lured by the Lord, he must travel along the road of sorrow and will fulfill His mission until the day he gains the martyr's crown. Jesus, the prophet, is endowed with Messianic kingship. He must accomplish His work. He knows it when He is but twelve years old (Luke 2:49). He is sent by God, He is the Servant of God foretold by Isaias, in Him the prophecies of the Old Testament must find their fulfillment (Matt. 26:54; Mark 9:12; 14:21; 27:49; Luke 22:37; John 3:14; 12:34; 13:18; 20:9). And Jesus wills that the will of God be done: these two wills are morally one. And this unity of will is a generous source of *exousia*. He conquers Satan (Mark 3:27). The word of Christ is full of *Ex (-exousia)*. It is therefore fit to work miracles, to pardon sins, to make Jesus the Lord of the Sabbath. The word of Jesus is of absolute authority (Mark 13:31). Jesus is above traditional exegesis (Mark 7:1, 29), but also above the law, as in the case of the law of divorce (Mark 10:12) and Levitical purity. It is in the antithetical words of Jesus that those laws find their true accomplishment. To follow Jesus is more than to fulfill one's obligations toward one's parents (Matt. 8:22; Luke 9:60; Matt. 10:37; 14:26), because through Jesus eternal salvation is attained (Mark 8:38; Matt. 10:32 f.; Luke 12:8 f.). A severe judgment awaits those who do not follow the Redeemer: the scribes, the Pharisees, the cities of Galilee that have no faith, Jerusalem (Matt. 23:37 f.; Luke 13:34 f.), all Israel (Matt. 8:2 f.; Luke 13:25, 29). Some social classes

which seemed destined to be excluded from it will possess the kingdom of God, and others that were considered pious and just will be excluded; to Jesus it is given to deliver the final judgment. Jesus who, after shedding His blood for the redemption of many, will appear as Judge, powerful and glorious. Jesus is the Son of God. To the others Jesus turns with "your Father"; Jesus does not say "our," but "My Father." Others in aiming at perfection must imitate Jesus. He is greater than Solomon, greater than the prophets of the Old Testament (Matt. 12:41 ff.; Luke 11:32 ff.), greater than the Temple (Matt. 11:27; Luke 10:22).

It is impossible to discover any evolution, during His life, in this consciousness of Himself as the Messiah and the Son, because such consciousness was not that of a man only. When but twelve years old He knows He is bound by the will of His Father more than by the authority of His parents (Luke 2:49). Therefore the divine revelation at the moment of His baptism need not be considered either as an experience lived in His interior life or as the beginning of His Messianic consciousness.¹⁸ He is not the Son of God because He is the Messiah, but He is the Messiah because He is the Son of God. "Messiah" is His mission, Son of God is His relationship with God. And it is from the concept of "Son of God" that the light of the *exousia* emanates, illuminating the mission, the birth, the life, the works, the passion, the death, and the glorification of Jesus. This light goes further and illuminates the spirituality of the nascent Christianity, which in its turn was beginning its *via crucis*, strewn with sharp stones and thorns, and with

¹⁸ Josef Schmid, *Das Evangelium nach Markus* (Vol. II of the New Testament, ed. Wirkenshauer and Kuss, Regensburg, 1938), p. 111.

martyrdom and triumph, its *via crucis*, sorrowful and glorious.

What place should be given to this term in New Testament language? It will be useful first to remember what we know of the term *έξοτιν* in Greek. This word means: to have the possibility, the power, what is in the power of a person, what is not contrary to the law, to the religious law, what is licit. In the New Testament *έξοτιν* refers to the law and to the will of God. It indicates what corresponds to the divine will. However, it is the duty of man to examine that which (Eph. 5:10) is pleasing to the Lord, a concept that recalls more nearly the Hebrew *māšō hēn*, "to find grace in the sight of the Lord." The rabbis are often concerned with what it is not licit for men to ask, *en lō rēshūth*, the last word being nearly the equivalent of *έξοτιν*.

From *έξοτιν* we pass to *έξοντια*. *Ex* means in Greek the possibility of acting without impediment, the right, the permission, the liberty to do something with the support of the existing laws and of the authorities called upon to uphold the law; further it means the power exercised by the father, the master, the owner, the right to personal decision that a free man possesses, *plenipotentia* understood as a real and juridical possibility, as power and potentiality, imposing itself on others. Where the concept of power-potentiality, is emphasized a power akin to *dynamis*, to authorization, to *hybris* that at times is met with, the *Ex*, always implies a reference to a juridical order. At times it refers to the established authority.

According to Philo, *Ex.* means the power of the king, of his lieutenant, of the people. In opposition to goodness, *Ex.* means the power to punish. According to Josephus

Flavius, it is the royal power, the established authority, so far as it does not go against what the law permits or forbids.

According to the Septuagint, *Ex.* means the right, the full power, the permission and freedom in the juridical and political sense, the right granted by God,¹⁷ and in the sacred books the power of God, of the king, the power generally speaking: the established authority.

We find *Ex.* as the rendering of *memshālāh* (*dominio*), at times as a translation of the verb *sh-l-t*,¹⁸ sovereignty, supreme power, the infinite power of God, a concept which in the most ancient literature is expressed by the "hand (power) of the Lord."

In the New Testament *Ex.* stands for negative values, like Satan, or positive, beneficent, and seraphic ones, like Jesus Christ, on whom the Lord confers power, the power of the state like the Council, the authorities in conformity with the rabbinic *rēshūt*, and also—different in this from earlier literature—the power of spirits. The rabbinic *rēshūt* also has a vast semantic sphere: power that comes from possession, private or public, possession, the delegated power, freedom of action, divine power.

In the New Testament *Ex.* means the invisible power and will of God that is reflected in human life organized in communities, in nature, and in the heavens. The divine *Ex.* is the source of all rights, of all power, which are therefore associated with the greatest freedom. The entire

¹⁷ Clear exposition and rich documentation in *Theol. wb. zum N. T.*, ed. Gerhard Kittel, 1955, II, 557 ff.

¹⁸ Afrahat, the "wise man of Persia, whose priestly and literary activity dates from A.D. 337 onwards, speaks of the apostles as resplendent and blessed and refers to himself as *shālit*, a term indicating power deriving from his high ministry. See Paul Schwen, *Afrahat, Seine Person und sein Verständnis des Christendoms*, Berlin, 1907, pp. 5, 112.

creation is, according to St. Paul, the work of the *Ex.* of God, whereas for Philo it is a proof of the divine goodness.

If in rabbinical literature there is mention of the angel in charge (*menunēh*) of a given order of phenomena or of events, the Apoc. 14:18 speaks of the angel that had dominion, *Ex.*, over fire. God gives *Ex.* also to the powers destined to do the work of destruction, among whom Satan is not the last. Evil, however, may act and always acts in a sphere circumscribed by divine power. This is why Jesus 22:53 submits to brutal power, to the *Ex.* of darkness; in other words, as I believe, the Redeemer would perhaps have expressed Himself with reference to Genesis, chapter 1: *memshēleth hahōshēkh*. Jesus here appears as the light that shines in darkness and the darkness does not comprehend it (John 1:5).

The followers of Jesus share in His *Ex.* because to all who received Him He gave power (*Ex.*) to become sons of God, to those that believe in His name. In the Old Testament: "You, Israel, are sons of the Lord, your God." Now, the power to become the sons of God is given to anyone who receives Jesus, to anyone who believes in His name, that is, in Him.

"The Word gave them power," says Father Sales, "in other words, gave them the right to become the adopted sons of God, Jews or Gentiles, free men or slaves, learned or ignorant; He did not ask them for any other thing but faith in His name, that they should believe that He was the Son of God, and the redeeming Messiah." Here *Ex.* has the meaning of right. That inalienable and unconditional power, unconditional except in one respect, faith. Their will is their power. In virtue of sanctifying faith the soul

participates in the divine nature according to the "inhabitation of the Spirit of Sancti in anima iusti."

The *Ex.* of the apostles is that which God gave them. This power was given them "for the truth," that is, "to promote and extend the practice of the evangelical law," "therefore I write these things, being absent, that, being present I may not deal more severely, according to the power which the Lord has given me unto edification and not unto destruction" (II Cor. 13:10). Simon deceives himself by believing that it is possible to obtain *Ex.* by offering money. "Give me also the power, that on whomsoever I shall lay my hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost"; but the "the gift of God" is not acquired with money. Peter tells him: "Thou hast no part nor lot in this matter"¹⁹ (here we see a trace of the Hebrew *heleg venahalāh*) for thy heart is not right in the sight of God" (Acts 8:19).

The two olive trees of the Apoc. 11:4 have power to shut up the heavens so that no rain may fall in the days of their prophecy; equally they have power over the waters to change them into blood, thus repeating the *Ex.* of two of the Old Testament prophets, who above all else were celebrated for the number and importance of the miracles they had wrought: Elias and Moses.²⁰

Apoc. 2:26 gives to *Ex.* the meaning of power over the Gentiles given to the Messiah-King in Psalm 2. In Mark

¹⁹ Ρε τῷ λόγῳ, translated not by "in sermone isto" but by "in re ista." Of the two meanings contained in *dalbar*, the translator has chosen the least apt (not quoted by Strack-Billerbeck).

²⁰ Father Sales in identifying the second "olive tree" wavers between Enoch and Moses, but seeing that "Moses is already dead," it does not seem admissible that he must die a second time; the right of the matter, we think, is with St. Hilary, who considers it to be Moses; because, according to rabbinical tradition, Moses, like Elias, "went up to heaven" (*Moshech 'aīlāh lamarōm*).

2:34 *Ex.* denotes the power that a master has over his servants.

I Cor. 9:1-14 speaks of *Ex.*, that is, the right possessed by those who announce the Gospel and live on the Gospel. In I Cor. 8:9 *Ex.* is the liberty of action which any member of a community can dispose of. In I Cor. 10:23 we have the concept of *Ex.* as meaning what is licit. In what is licit we must consider what is useful; that may, however, become dangerous when looked at from the point of view of the consequences of such *Ex.*, of such liberty. This *Ex.* must consequently be tempered by taking into account the good of our neighbors, by considering, in other words, if it may be edifying to them or not.

At times we meet "*poteſtates*" in union with *ἀρχαὶ δινάμεις κυριότητες*, in conformity with the rabbinical *rēshūjōth*, where the New Testament as well as the rabbis are opposed to dualist theological concepts, Gnostic in character. It is ordinarily the case of cosmic power.²¹

Considering the famous words in I Cor. 11:10, "therefore a woman ought to have power (*ἐξουσίαν*) over her head on account of the angels," the matter appears to me much simpler than it is ordinarily taken to be. *Pērēt* is a turban, and the turban like the belt (*ēzōr*) gives a feeling of strength to him that wears it. The woman is not meant to have "power," but a turban on her head; nor need we think of the verb *shālot*²² in order to reach the idea of power. The translator evidently knew that the meaning of *pērēt* was somehow linked with the idea of strength, power. The expression "on account of the angels" refers to

²¹ See *Theol. ub. zum N. T.*, II, 558 ff.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 571.

the guardian angels, which were known also to the rabbinical world.²³

Let it not be objected that "turban" has to be a masculine garment; it is a piece of cloth—certainly not a transparent veil—with which the married woman covers her head as a symbol that in her abides the *reihūth*, the *Ex.*, of her husband.

Verse 5 is interesting as a contribution to the knowledge of the idea of the prophetic veil used by prophetesses mentioned by Ezechiel. About the veiled prophets of the ancient East, see Moscati in *Orientalia*, XIV (1945), 334.

As to the character of Jesus' eloquence, much can be derived from Mark 1:22, Luke 4:32, and Matt. 7:28 f. The Greek text speaks of Christ as of one who possesses *exousia*. This term, which, as we have seen, also means power, strength,²⁴ permission, is generally translated in this passage by "authority." Father Lagrange commenting on Matt. 7:29,²⁵ points out that this rendering is fitting for the Sermon on the Mount, where really Jesus speaks with great "personal authority." This statement must be taken as a hypothesis. We must, however, note that the learned Father Lagrange always makes use of the expression, "having authority," in Matthew as well as in Luke and Mark.

Bergmann²⁶ gives to the expression under consideration the meaning of "inspired by God," thinking that

²³ Strack-Billerbeck, III, 435 ff. Men cover their heads out of respect for the divine Majesty.

²⁴ Οὐρανοῦ καὶ τόπου εἰσιας δύνατος in II Mach., 9:24 is translated by Bévenot, *Die beiden Makkabäerbücher* (Vol. IV, sec. 4, of the Bonn Bible), Bonn, 1921, p. 184, by "Lord of the spirit, sovereign of unlimited power." This translation seems preferable to that of A. Kampfhausen in *Die Apokryphen und Pseudepig. des A. T.*, by E. Kantsch, Tübingen, 1920, p. 91, who gives, "Sovereign of all might."

²⁵ Lagrange, *St. Matthieu*, p. 159.

²⁶ Bergmann, *Apologetik*, p. 23.

exousia is a reflex of the expression common in rabbinical literature, *mi-pi ha-gēbhurāh*, which taken literally means "from the mouth of the power," or, in other words, "by order of divine power, in virtue of divine power." The Greek text would therefore be a literal reproduction of the term used in the Mishnic language (*exousia*, *gēbhurāh*, power), but it would not bring out the intimate meaning because reference to the divine element would be omitted. On the other hand we may remark that the Hebrew phrase which Bergmann has reconstructed from the Greek text would correspond in the main, but would lack the concept of "authority," which is peculiar to the term *exousia*.

Michaelis²⁷ comments thus on Mark 1:22: "And it was as if he had got (from God Himself) full powers, and this in opposition to the scribes who are the scholars specializing in the interpretation of the Old Testament. Their knowledge is handed down orally through generations, from teacher to pupils." In other words, the sacred discourse which Jesus, like many other persons of that time, makes in the synagogue, sounds like an announcement and gives the impression of being the spiritual creation of a man to whom the Lord Himself has granted the greatest power, or, as Bergmann puts it, whom God has inspired. Wrede thinks of "the way Jesus spoke, direct, original, prophetically powerful, prophetically sure, sweeping men off their feet."

Volkmar interprets the saying, "having *exousia*," as follows: "as one in whom resides a supernatural power, divine or demoniacal."²⁸

²⁷ Michaelis, *N. T.*, I, 30.

²⁸ The considerations of these two authors are referred to by Bergmann, *loc. cit.*

The *Ex.* of Jesus, the Son of God, is the divine power that He reveals with full liberty. In John 10:17 f. Jesus says: "Therefore doth the Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I may take it again. No man taketh it away from Me, but I lay [offer, give] it down of Myself. And I have power to take it up again. This commandment have I received of My Father." Jesus possesses of right the power which in Psalm 2 is granted to the Messianic king. To Christ was granted the *Ex.*, the power, full and free, to give eternal life to all those whom the Father had given Him (John 17:2). This power was necessary, even indispensable, since the way leads *per Jesum ad Patrem et a Patre ad Jesum*. Matt. 11:27: "All things are delivered [here we must think of *māsōr, tradere*] to Me by My Father. And no one knoweth the Son but the Father; neither doth anyone know the Father but the Son, and he to whom it shall please the Son to reveal Him." To Jesus "all power is given in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 18:27). Jesus has the power to forgive sins (Mark 2:10 f.), and the healing of the soul carries with it the healing of the body. He has the power and the right to do it. With the power of healing the sick is associated that of driving out devils (Mark 3:15), a power that He transmits to His disciples (6:7); thus also He confers on them the power to crush serpents and scorpions, dominion over any power (*dynamis, virtus*) of the enemy (Luke 10:19). The enemy's power is *dynamis*, physical strength; that which derives from Jesus is *exousia*.

Dalman²⁰ builds up *exousia* with the Aramaic *keshallātā*. We cannot consider *shallitā* as the original expression to which the "having authority" of the Gospel is related.

²⁰ Dalman, *Jesus*, p. 1.

Shallit has in Hebrew the meaning of "powerful," one who has power.²¹ The feminine form *shallateth*, which is found in Ezech. 16:30, is translated by "shameless."²² In a Midrashic passage²³ referred to by Dalman only in passing and in a footnote, which we have examined more carefully, recurs the expression, *mah dehil hadēn shallita* ("how terrible that powerful man"). This is an exclamation uttered by the people of a place witnessing the entry of a powerful man leading very large groups of armed men, or better, as the text puts it, of *lestes* ("robbers"). These few data seem to give us sufficient food for thought about the idea of Dalman. To have spoken as a *shallit* would have frightened the crowds rather than filled them with enthusiasm, and such is not the preaching of Christ.

As the word *exousia* may also mean "permission," we might think of a term that we find in Talmudic²⁴ language dear to speakers in the synagogues, and still in use, the term *reshūth* which we mentioned in our introductory chapter, and which, like the corresponding Aramaic *reshūthā*, has the meaning of "permission, authorization, power." Originally the word *reshūth* had a purely topographical character, meaning power in the sense of possession, possession of land. The *reshūth ha-jahid*, individual ownership, was distinguished from the *reshūth ha-rabbim*, the collective ownership, as of public squares or public highways. Later, however, the concrete meaning was replaced by the abstract, the man who had a *reshūth* became

²⁰ Gesenius-Buhl, *Heb.*, s.v.

²¹ Bible of Cardinal Ferrari (Florence, 1929), p. 1109.

²² *Midrash*, literally "research," is the name given to some commentaries on biblical texts, of which the most ancient are largely nomistic and the most recent of haggadic, i.e., conversational and didactic character.

²³ T. B. *Hagigah*, 15A. Cf. Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, I, 470.

the man of spiritual and moral "power," the man, that is, having authority, being authorized.

In the liturgical text we often meet the expression *birshūth shamajim* ("with heaven's authorization") or *mereshūth el 'eljōn* ("with permission of the supreme God"). According to Shemtob Gaguine,²⁴ a diligent collector and a trustworthy interpreter of Jewish custom in Palestine and Syria, the custom still persists among the Jewish communities of Turkey and of Egypt for the one who says grace after meals to pronounce the following: "Give us *birshūth shamajim*" ("with the authorization of heaven"); if the rabbi is present, he says: "with the *reshūth* of our teacher, the rabbi—with the authorization of the master of the house and with the authorization of all that partake of this banquet." The latter answer in unison, *Kebhodō be-rōsh* ("your Lordship first"). In the German-speaking provinces the formula is simpler: "With the authorization of our Lord, of our teachers, and of my teacher." The formula used in the East can be found also in the writings of the Talmudic doctors. Those present were forbidden to drink from the moment when the giver of the blessing had asked for the cup of blessing till the end of the ceremony.²⁵ According to information given by Rashi, even the giver of the blessing on the bread must accomplish the formality of *netilāth reshūth*, that is, he must ask permission from all present. The formality of *netilāth reshūth* was observed also by the pupil toward his teacher, and by the servant toward his master, when he asked permission to retire. The same interpretation is given to the liturgical gesture that comes at the end of the prayer of

²⁴ Gaguine, *Keter shēm töbh*, I, 141.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

the eighteen blessings, and that consists chiefly in stepping back three paces from the spot on which the prayer was said, and in bowing low, according to the ritual code, as a servant departing from his master.

The Babylonian doctor, Rabh (first half of the second century) in a speech of haggadic character delivered on the occasion of his ordination as a rabbi (teacher) and judge, mentions the fact of *netilāth reshūth*, that is, of the asking permission of the Lord by the sun and the moon before beginning their course in the heavens. At that moment the eyes of these givers of light are blinded by the splendor coming from the divine Majesty; then the Lord hurls lightning before them so that, guided by this light, they can accomplish their journey. According to the ingenious interpretation of Marmorstein,²⁶ this passage of the speech of Rabh is an allusion to the ceremony of ordination: the disciple who has now got his degree and is about to leave his alma mater, rids himself, so to speak, of the weight of the great responsibilities he is about to assume, by appealing to the authority of his teacher. He will run the course prescribed by his career in virtue of an authorization that is granted to him and of the light of the school he has received.²⁷

In the sepharditic communities, the one who is called on to play the horn on New Year's Day or to read the parchment of Esther during Purim, before accomplishing the liturgical ceremony, says: "With the authorization of my Lord and of my teachers." In all the above-mentioned cases the one delegated to perform a ceremony asks permis-

²⁶ Marmorstein, *Doctrine of God*, II, 146 ff.

²⁷ With regard to the form of the *netilāth reshūth*, i.e., of the authorization to practice as a teacher and judge in a community, granted to a pupil of the Talmudic academies, T. B. Sanhedrin 5a is particularly instructive.

sion of those whom he considers his teachers and lords; and they take him as authorized from on high by the Lord.

On this subject we may remember in the morning prayer, based on Isa. 6:3, the dramatization of the heavenly scene, where the angels sing in chorus the "trisagion" in honor of the Lord. It is said that before taking it up the angels relieve one another of the weight of sovereignty over the heavens and give one another the *reshūth* to glorify their Creator with gladness. It is worth noting that the term *we-qarā* ("and they cried one to another") contained in the text of Isaias, corresponds to the term *umqabbelin* in the Targum, explained by the commentators thus: they take the *reshūth* from one another. In his *Sentenze*, R. Nathan says that at the moment when the angels open their mouth to intone the sacred hymns they say to one another: "You begin because you are greater than I." Each wishes to have the *reshūth*, the authorization, of the other angel, whom he considers superior to himself.²⁸

Now it seems to us that the Hebrew *reshūth* or the Aramaic *reshutā* reflects clearly the idea contained in *exousia*, because such terms are the expression of a moral power deriving from authorization. Jesus speaks like one having *exousia*, that is, not as one who represents an earthly power but as one who has received religious and moral authorization from God Himself.

Still remaining in the circumscribed field of the word *reshūth*, we beg leave to propose two phrases which in our view are fit to reproduce with perfect accuracy the Greek text of the Gospel, when it speaks of Christ "as having

²⁸ For the comments on the liturgical text, see *Siddur asar ha-tefilloth*, Vilna, 1914, p. 260.

exousia." One is *ke-rashshaj*. The expression *rashshaj*, or *rashshajj*, is an adjective form deriving from the same root as *reshūth*, and it means, having permission, being authorized, having authority. Whereas the phrase *mi-pi ha-gēbhurāh*, which Bergmann has in mind, contains implicitly the consent of the divine, that fundamentally important concept is missing, in reality, from *rashshaj*, nor can it be added as a complement, because the word, for linguistic reasons, cannot be linked to a substantive. But from the Greek text it is not at all obvious that the original text itself contained any indication of the one who gave the authorization. Moreover, in the present case, to have said that the authorization was from God would have been superfluous, would have been a pleonasm, because as we are dealing here with a discourse of pronouncement, delivered with prophetic force in the synagogue, the concept of God as the first and only source of all authorization is implicit. Christ is not a *rashshaj* in the legal sense of the word, he is not a person filling a juridical office. He does not give expression to the human *ratio*, but speaks *ke-rashshaj*, that is, "as one having *exousia*," the (divine) authorization. His followers consider His eloquence to be due to a supernatural communication made to Him by God through the breath of His Spirit, that is, of entirely prophetic character.

As Auerbach²⁹ pointed out recently, the concept "to be a prophet" is rendered in biblical language by the passive form (*nif'al*) or by the reflexive form (*hithpa'el*). The former indicates one who receives prophetic power; the latter form refers to one who acts as a *nabhi*, as a prophet, that is, as a man made a receptacle of the divine. Jesus,

²⁹ Auerbach, *Wüste und gelobtes Land*, Berlin, 1936.

therefore, gives the impression of a return of the Holy Ghost of prophecy among Israel. He is what later on the biblical authors will be to early writers of the Church, "an instrument of the Lord" producing the sounds that their real artist, the Lord Himself, desired.

The other phrase that fits admirably into the Aramaic style of the Talmud and perhaps corresponds even better than *rashshaj* to the concept expressed in the Greek text of the Gospel is *dē-īth lēh rēshuthā*; its meaning is, "as one having authority" (i.e., from the Lord). Already in Talmudic literature we find *rēshuthā* with the meaning of "divine authorization," without any explicit mention of God.

The word *ke-rashshaj* by itself, in the place and circumstances in which it is used, represents extremely well the Gospel expression, "as having *exousia*." The phrase *dē-īth lēh rēshuthā* represents better still and, we venture to say, with irrefutable certainty the original Aramaic text of the passage in question.

In the first chapter of the Gospel of St. Mark the word *exousia* is to be found not only in verse 27 ("and He taught as one having *exousia* and not as the scribes"), but also in verse 27, where we read that the exorcism accomplished by Jesus arouses great wonder and that those present say to one another: "What thing is this? A doctrine with *exousia* (*κατ ἐξουσιαν*). He commandeth even the unclean spirits." ⁴⁰ According to Klostermann,⁴¹ in the first case the *exousia* is a manifestation of the power residing in Jesus, whereas in the second it is still the case of the word *exousia*

⁴⁰ Others translate: "What new doctrine is this? He commands with authority even the unclean spirits."

⁴¹ Klostermann, *Markus*, p. 14.

which, descending from on high and permeating with its own substance the whole spirituality of Christ, is made manifest not only in the word but also in the miraculous deed. The original Aramaic text must have contained in Mark simply *birshutā*, "with *exousia*."⁴² "A doctrine with *exousia*" is to be understood as a "doctrine authorized and therefore authoritative," because if we think that *reshutā* is not that authority emanating from the person but that proceeding from a higher source, then we must recognize that "to be authorized" or "to have authority" is the same thing.

By the examination of this word we have again brought into evidence the distinctive character of the oratory of Christ. And it is to this moving and prophetically sure eloquence, to this way of speech which makes manifest the divine power, that the term *nesār* was most fitting, the term which points with certainty to a message delivered in a highly authoritative, unusual, and artistic tone.

⁴² The term *reshutā* probably occurred in Matt. 9:8 too, which in the English translation reads: "And the multitude seeing it, feared, and glorified God that gave such power to men." This power is precisely the authority conferred, a masterly, imposing authority. The crowds that praise the Lord for giving the power to Jesus, a sovereign in the spiritual realm, remind us of the Hebrew men of prayer who at sight of a sovereign bless the Lord who "made partner of His glory one of flesh and blood," i.e., a man. God created all for His glory, to serve Him. God is glorified when we consider our own lives as dedicated to the service of God. See remarks (which bear careful examination) of A. Marmostein, "Conception théocentriques et anthropocentriques de l'Agada," in *Revue des études juives*, Vol. LXXXVI, no. 171, 1928, pp. 36-46.

CHAPTER IV

Rabbinic and New Testament Methodology

1. A PAGE OF BIBLICAL PSYCHOLOGY

IN Amos 7:7 f., the prophet has the following vision: "The Lord was standing upon a plastered wall (*homath 'nakh*), and in His hand a mason's trowel (*'nakh*). And the Lord said to me: What seest thou, Amos? And I said: A mason's trowel. And the Lord said: Behold, I will lay down the trowel in the midst of My people Israel. I will plaster them over no more." Thereupon the Lord announces the complete destruction of the sanctuaries of Israel.

A number of scholars, not knowing how to account for the mention of the trowel, a tool used in building walls, in a vision that precedes the foretelling of the destruction of Jerusalem, have proposed other meanings for the term *'nakh*. The Septuagint renders the term by "steel," but the value to be attributed to this translation is uncertain, as there is question apparently of a borrowed word. Comparison with other Semitic dialects suggests "lead" or "tin." Condamin thinks that the "wall of *'nakh*" signifies an impregnable fortress. Nowack tries to smooth over the difficulty by proposing the substitution of *'armon* for

'nakh, which would give the reading, "palace wall."¹ Sellin says that we have here a wall that is to be razed, as it is already honeycombed with fissures; the sins committed have, in a way, opened up a breach in the wall, so that it is on the point of collapsing.² He too, however, is convinced that *homath 'nakh* indicates the need of a textual emendation, and proposes the reading, *'ebhen 'nakh*, "rock of *'nakh*." Wellhausen and others suppress the word *homath* (wall of . . .).

As for the *'nakh* which the Lord holds in his hand, some scholars suppose that what is meant is an iron weapon or some sort of tool for destroying. The vision would then represent the scene of an activity on the part of the judge, who is determined to destroy the city in consequence of the crimes committed by it.

The parallel passages cited in connection with Amos 7:7 f. are: Isaias 34:11; 28:17; IV Kings 21:13; Lamentations 2:8. In Isaias 34:11, where the destruction of Edom is in question, we are told that the Lord will stretch over it the cord of *tohu* and the rock (plummet) of *bohu*. Procksch explains this as follows. The land shall be measured by the Lord with the measuring-line and with the plummet of chaos, whose elements, waste and desolation (Gen. 1:2; Jer. 4:23), are here partitioned among the measuring instruments.³ The prophet means to say that the land to be measured resembles chaos. We are not to think, continues Procksch, of a construction of houses (which in reality would be a destruction of houses), for the instruments mentioned, the line and the plummet, are used also

¹ *Die kleinen Propheten*, pp. 156 f.

² *Das Zwölftenprophetenbuch*, I, 251.

³ *Isaias I*, 430.

for measuring fields. Implicitly, therefore, the instruments of measurement (the line and the plummet) are spoken of in connection with a work of destruction.

Isaiah 28:17 also mentions the measuring-line and the plummet, made ready on the eve of a razing of walls. In IV Kings 21:13, after announcing the extent of the destruction about to take place, the Lord says: "And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria and the weight of the house of Achab." According to Landersdorfer, this passage means that Jerusalem and the House of David are so corrupt that they shall receive the fate meted out to Samaria and the House of Achab.⁴ In Lamentations 2:8 we again read of the measuring-line stretched out at the moment the Lord is about to destroy the walls of Jerusalem. In Ezekiel 40:3, furthermore, the prophet sees a man who holds in his hand a measuring-line; we may also consult Apocalypse 11:1.⁵

From an examination of all these passages, prescinding from any question of suppression of texts or emendations, one well-established fact seems to emerge: on the eve of the razing of a city's walls, the Lord measures them with instruments ordinarily employed in works of construction. But may we admit the use of tools designed for construction where the project undertaken is a work of destruction?

This question was recently raised by Junker.⁶ Reviving a hypothesis which in our opinion is not very felicitous and which Van Hoonacker had advanced in his day, Junker

⁴ *Die Bücher der Könige*, p. 223.

⁵ A relief of Ur, dating from the ancient Babylonian epoch, shows a man with a measuring cord and a staff. Cf. Gressmann, *Altorientalische Texte und Bilder zum A. T.*, no. 661.

⁶ "Text und Bedeutung der Vision Amos 7, 7-9." *Biblica*, XVII (1936), 359.

proposes a change in vowels for Amos 7:7: we should read *hammath* 'nakh for *homath* 'nakh, since there is question of melted lead. The Lord, in the vision of Amos, has in His hand melted lead which He pours into Israel's intestines, in the way that, according to a note in the Talmud, it was poured into the mouths of those condemned to death. Prescinding from aesthetic considerations, a vision of God holding melted lead in His hand is foreign to every human conception. Besides, can we imagine the Lord performing or even meditating so horrible an act of cruelty? In all biblical literature can we unearth a single example that would warrant the idea of ascribing such a deed to God? Lastly, a linguistic consideration must be borne in mind: where do we find the word *hammah* or *hammath* used in the sense of "melted"?

If, in spite of all this, we were to grant that the passage speaks of melted lead intended to burn the nation's entrails, how are we to account for the employment of the measuring-line and the plummet in the parallel passages? Surely, no stretch of fancy can imagine these tools to be instruments of destruction or of torture; yet they occur in the very passages of the Bible we have mentioned, where works of demolition are spoken of, and Junker also refers to them. According to A. Sanda's idea, reported and accepted by Junker, the mention of these tools and of their use would be an ironic expression on the part of the Lord. This interpretation strikes us as most unsatisfying; and Junker himself, who makes the idea of irony his own, is forced to concede that irony is out of place in the passage from Lamentations, where the Lord is depicted as stretching out the measuring-line. In this instance, he says, we have to suppose that the Lord goes about the business of

measuring before taking Jerusalem from the Israelites and giving it to their enemies. The text states explicitly: the Lord has purposed to destroy the walls of Jerusalem; He has stretched out the line; He will not withdraw His hand; He will make every fortress mournful; all will perish.

In our opinion, none of the texts examined exhibits any trace of irony, any idea of handing over cities, any hint of grossly inhuman punishments. We are convinced that all these passages have to do simply with objects used for the perpendicular or horizontal measurement of a wall or a plot of land. But then we have to face another question. If the cord, the trowel, and the plumb-line are nothing but tools for measuring and therefore means of building, and if they are meant to indicate nothing else than measurement, why does the Lord use these symbols? Why does He manifest these visions to the prophets? Why does He speak of the application of these means on the eve of destruction?

Before answering this question, let us advert to a peculiarity of Hebrew theology. The Lord is represented as first projecting future events in His imagination, and then as taking counsel, or, as we should say today, as coming to a decision. In *Isaias* 14:24 ff. the destruction of Assyria and the subsequent liberation of Israel are first conceived by the Lord and then "purposed," and this is "the counsel that I have purposed" (v. 26), or the decision taken "upon all the earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all nations." The decree, the decision of the Lord, cannot be set aside. In the same book, 23:8, the Lord has "purposed" the fall of Tyre. *Isaias* 19:17 deals with the counsel, the decree of the Lord concerning the ruin of Egypt. *Isaias* 25:1 is most interesting, for here the designs or decisions

of the Lord are viewed from afar, from the remote past, and are faithful and stable. And *Isaias* 30:1 is of inestimable value. Here we have 'soth 'esah, "to take counsel," that is, "to make a decision," as parallel to *n'sokh massekhanah*, "to pour out an image." This last expression is explained with great acumen by the Targum as "to counsel a counsel," or "to make a decision." "To make a decision," that is, "soth 'esah or *n'sokh massekhanah*, frequently means to form an image or, as we say today, to form an idea, to present to oneself the picture of what is to happen.

Amos, chapter 7, and the parallel passages also contain predictions of events that are to occur in a more or less remote future. Seeing the wicked deeds of a certain people, the Lord determines to punish them. He performs that interior action which nowadays we describe as the taking of measures designed to chastise the guilty. For modern peoples the expression, "to take measures," has become a pale, bloodless, empty phrase. But we know very well that the ancient East possessed an imaginative power that was much more vivacious: the decrees fixed by the Lord far in advance led men to take measures, and He, too, took measures in the real, concrete sense of the word. Or we may say that the prophet, aware of the evil deeds committed now by one people, now by another, feels in his soul that the Lord cannot refrain from decreeing their destruction long ahead of the event; and then he has a vision of the "measures" the Lord takes to punish the guilty nation or metropolis. And what can he see in this vision if not the plumb-line and the level and the cord? These are the three typical tools for measuring length, straightness, and levelness.

The Bible describes two kinds of construction. In

Genesis, God creates by means of a word, that is, by means of the power contained in the word. In the cosmogony of the Book of Job, God creates systematically, measuring and using the compass, that is, making a circle on the surface of the *t'hom*, the abyss.⁷ In the same way two kinds of destruction are mentioned. The Pentapolis is destroyed by the elements: fire and sulphur are rained down from heaven. For the destruction of Jerusalem and of other capitals that are offensive to His eyes, the Lord first devotes considerable time to measure them; a systematic work of destruction is contemplated. Construction and destruction are analogous activities: in the first, the Lord's will changes chaos into a work of wisdom; the second plunges what is well-ordered and full of wisdom back into a chaotic state. Because of the analogy, the idea of "measuring" occurs to the prophet's mind in both actions.

Besides the passages cited, other biblical texts inform us that the measurements taken by God signify that He is about to make a decision, either to the advantage or to the disadvantage of a people. In the Book of Lamentations, mentioned above, we are told that God *natah kaw*, "hath stretched out His line," and that He will not withdraw His hand from destroying Israel. In Zacharias 1:16 the same expression occurs, again with reference to the Lord: "and the building line shall be stretched forth" over Jerusalem; but here a work of complete and magnificent reconstruction is envisaged. Clearly the phrase *natah kaw* has the original meaning of "to stretch out a line," that is, to measure, to calculate, to take a position for good or for

⁷ The theology of Job differs from biblical theology in general, so much so that S. D. Luzzatto (*Penine Shaddai*, pp. 374 f.) thinks that the author of the book is a non-Hebrew.

ill. It is only the full context that enables us to infer what position is being taken. These two passages corroborate the explanation we have given regarding the mention of measuring tools in the Bible.

The problem that has so wearied the minds of scholars, that has supplied exegetes with so much thread to tangle, and that has called forth such a variety of commentaries and so many complicated ideas, is, in our judgment, no more than a problem in biblical psychology. If we but think of the normal use made of real, literal instruments of measurement, and associate this idea with "measures" taken in a metaphorical sense, the whole matter becomes plain.

Measures are called *middoth* in Hebrew.

2. *Middoth*

Measures, *middoth* (singular *middah*, from *madoh*, to measure),⁸ are closely associated with the vision of future events, or take on an imaginative character. Therefore we need not be surprised if the same term was applied to certain forms of reasoning, and if in rabbinic Hebrew we find it employed in connection with the Lord's attributes. Clemency, mercy, longanimity, charity, and truth are the *middoth*, the measures, the attributes of the Lord, or the forms in which He gives outward manifestation of His in-

⁸ On the term *middah*, see Barrois, "La métrologie dans la Bible," *Revue biblique*, XL (1931), 186, n. 2. With respect to *ammatz ish*, "cubit of a man's hand," in Deut. 3:11, the explanation given by Barrois (*ibid.*, p. 187, n. 5) does not seem convincing to us. In our opinion, the expression is really regarded as an antithesis to "sacred cubit" or "royal cubit," that is, the official measure deposited in the Temple. A similar instance is found in the phrase *mikhtabah 'elohim*, "writing of God" (Exod. 32:16), as opposed to *heret 'anash*, Vulgate *stylus hominis*, "a man's pen" (Isa. 8:1). Cf. Eisler, *Ma'aleh hak-k'thabh*, p. 15.

ner being. The word *middoth* serves to signify the complexus of qualities that give us a general view of the design, of the mental *habitus* of the Lord's Spirit.

In the case of man, too, we meet with *middoth tobhoth* (good measures) and *middoth ra'oth* (evil measures), in the sense of good or bad "qualities." And it is precisely in the rabbinic texts of the earliest period of Christianity that these expressions occur with great frequency: they allude to those outward manifestations of character and temperament that furnish us with means for "measuring" an individual, for judging him, for forming a complete image of his inner value. The *middoth* are conceived as dimensions translated into traits, which in their totality delineate a form, an image. Transferred to the moral sphere, they constitute the totality of a personality, the moral configuration of an individual.

The term *middoth* is also employed with reference to the attitude a man takes toward anyone or in considering a question, because, before coming to a decision, he investigates the problem occupying him, examines it, subjects it to the scrutiny of his thought and often of his feelings, which ordinarily are not disjoined from his thinking. In a certain way he "measures"—today we should say "weighs"—the situation.

In his feelings toward the Lord, man must always adopt a single measure: gratitude. This is the sense in which is understood the haggadic explanation of the verse: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart, and with thy whole soul, and with thy whole strength (*m'od'kha*)" (Deut. 6:5; cf. Matt. 22:37). Here the word *m'od'kha* is explained: *b'khol middah umiddah*, with every measure. Whether the Lord employs the measure of His benevo-

lence or whether He employs the measure of severity, we must ever thank Him. The haggadic interpretation acquires considerable flavor from the play on words among three terms that have like consonants but different vowels and meanings: *m'od* (faculty), *middah* (measure), and *modeh*, participle of the verb *madoh* (one who acknowledges or is grateful).

But in the relations between individual and individual the measures to be adopted can vary. Following the path indicated by logic, right, and justice, a man may rest within the limits marked out by *middath had-din*, the measure of law. But the man who is particularly good and is fond of peace may go beyond his *middoth* to follow the dictates of pure charity and to take the *middath ha-rah'mim*, the measure of mercy. In *K'thubhoth* 50 B mention is made of the dividing line between the *middath had-din* and the *middath ha-rah'mim*, and the meaning "measure of right" is usually attributed to the divine name Elohim, whereas the meaning "measure of mercy" is ascribed to the Tetragrammaton. "To go beyond measures" means to renounce the rights coming to us from the criteria of objective justice, and hence "to pardon." Thus in *Joma* V, 23 A it is said: "Whoever goes beyond his *middoth*, whoever supports an offense, an injury, or an injustice with kindness, receives the pardon of all his sins."

In view of the fact that a man may remain resolutely within the sphere of his own rights, but may also renounce them in favor of a sentiment of clemency or indulgence, the diversity of his behavior is not without consequences, for he in turn has to undergo the judgment of God or of other men. And then is applied the norm: *b'middah she-adam modeh, mod'din lo*, with the measure with which a

man measures, it shall be measured out to him.⁹ This means: the very attitude a man takes with regard to another's action, will be taken by the Lord or by other men with regard to him. What measures, then, ought one to employ when judging? A doctor living in 110 B.C. teaches: "And every man judges according to the measure of justification."¹⁰ Hillel says: "Do not judge your neighbor until you find yourself in his situation."¹¹ In *Derekh' Eres* 3 we read: "Judge your neighbor according to the measure (literally: the pan of the balance) of merit, and do not cause him to sink (do not condemn him) according to the measure of his fault." The doctors of the Talmud, therefore, recommend that we judge our neighbor with indulgence and benevolence, and with a tendency to exculpate him.

The same thought occurs in the Gospels and is expressed in words that are about the same. Thus Matthew 7:2: "With what judgment you judge, you shall be judged; and with what measure you mete, it shall be measured to you again." P. Lagrange comments: "The kindness we employ in judging our neighbor will be shown to us by God."¹²

⁹ *Sotah* 1, 7. This saying involves the principle of correspondence or, to be more exact, of equivalence between sin and punishment, a principle already expressed in biblical theodicy in connection with the doctrine: good to the good, and evil to the evil. Since the law decreed by the Lord intends the punishment to lay bare the sin, the punishment reflects the character of the sin and in a certain way manifests to the eyes of all men those details which the sinner planned for the greater success of his evil deed, and which he hoped to keep concealed.

¹⁰ Cf. *'Abboth*, I, 6.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, II, 4.

¹² *Evangile selon Saint Matthieu*, p. 145. In this matter of judging with kindness, the commentators explain that harshness toward others stems from indulgence toward oneself. "Let us number ourselves among the imperfect, and, to render the Lord's judgment favorable to us, or rather, to escape judgment altogether, let us ever entertain charitable thoughts." Cf. Lagrange and Lavergne, *Synopse des quatre évangiles*, p. 75.

In Luke 6:38 Jesus says: "Give, and it shall be given to you: good measure and pressed down and shaken together and running over shall they give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you shall mete withal, it shall be measured to you again." It is very interesting to note that, whereas *middah* in the Talmudic saying has a transferred value, although one that remains within the order of ideas having a juridical character, Luke evokes a more ancient concept of the word; he associates with it adjectives that refer properly to the capacity of a receptacle used in measuring.¹³ In Luke we find a kind of commentary that introduces a notable change in the ideological content of the ancient maxim. Christ exhorts His hearers: "Pack much good into the measure you use in judging your neighbor, because this good will be returned to you with interest, and it will be measured to you with a most bountiful measure, with extraordinary generosity." In any case, this passage shows plainly that Jesus inculcated kindness in judging.

Although Christ takes as His point of departure this principle which He shares with the rabbinic world, He proceeds to a different teaching: "Judge not, that you may not be judged."¹⁴ "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you shall be forgiven."¹⁵ This is a maxim that could

¹³ In St. Paul the notion of "measure," expressed in concrete terms, takes a remarkable turn: "That, being rooted and founded in charity, you may be able to comprehend, with all the saints, what is the breadth and length and height and depth; to know also the charity of Christ, which surpasseth all knowledge" (Eph. 3:17 ff.). John Re, *Le Lettere di S. Paolo*, p. 321, observes: "The four dimensions refer to the charity of Jesus Christ, and serve no other purpose than to emphasize the immensity of this love."

¹⁴ Matt. 7:1.

¹⁵ Luke 6:37. The Gospel teaching, "Forgive and you shall be forgiven," agrees with rabbinic teaching. Referring to the assertion in the Torah, "In

not have proved acceptable to the rabbinic spirit, although the "Judge not" of the Gospel seems to refer rather to private judgment in everyday life rather than to the public courts. Every city and town had a more or less numerous and authoritative tribunal that handed down sentences and condemnations. Hebraism did not require a man to renounce the judgment which a private individual might express about the life and activity of his fellow man, and still less the official judgment which the court pronounced in penal or religious matters, and the like. The rabbinic world regarded judging and being judged as necessary; it merely recommended that judgment should be accompanied by benevolence and kindness, so that one might cherish the hope of being judged with like sentiments. Rabbinic teaching never reached the point of urging men not to judge.¹⁰ The Gospel teaching, on the contrary, comes to the conclusion that we should not judge at all, that we should refrain from all judgment. It draws the final consequences from the rabbinic teaching, and thus advances far beyond those masters who were the first to proclaim the principle.

that day He will pardon, to make you pure; you shall be cleansed before the Lord of all your sins," the doctors of the Misina (in Joma VIII, 9), stress the word, "the Lord," and arrive at the conclusion: "The day of Kippur will bring you purification before the Lord, even though not before men. And man will not be pure before the Lord until he has begged pardon of the comrade with whom he finds himself at odds." Therefore we must forgive a neighbor's offenses and be reconciled with him, that we may be able to achieve reconciliation with the Lord; we must forgive others' sins in order that our own sins may be forgiven.

¹⁰ Similarly in the matter of oaths, the rabbis insisted on the duty of not calling on the name of God falsely or in vain, so that the masses might become accustomed to refrain from swearing lightly and for trivial things, even in the case of true statements. But they did not teach that people should never swear, as we are taught in Matt. 5:34 ff. The prohibition of oaths has never taken so clear and concise a form as we find it in the Gospel.

In his letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul seeks to show clearly that for the saints (that is to say, Christians), recourse to pagan judges is unbecoming. He says: "Know you not that the saints shall judge this world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters?" ¹¹ P. John Re comments: "As Christians, who are one with Jesus Christ, will rise with Him and will be glorified with Him, so they will judge the whole world with Him at the Last Judgment." The Apostle continues: "Know you not that we shall judge angels? How much more things of this world!" Therefore St. Paul wishes Christians themselves to be judges in the controversies that may spring up among them. Here, evidently, we are in a period in which life is insistent about its needs, a period in which the necessity of judging is imposed. In such circumstances Christians were appealing to pagans, and so the Apostle urges them rather to seek judgment among their brethren, from one of the "saints." The "judge not" preached by Christ cannot be observed literally. Nevertheless, mindful of this teaching, the Apostle asks in the same letter: "You have lawsuits one with another; why do you not rather take wrong? Why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?" Let that tendency again flourish which was dear to the first days of Christianity and especially to the Gospels, of resigning oneself to undergo even wrong in order to abstain from judging and condemning. This is the ultimate conclusion drawn from the principle; with the measure with which a man measures, it shall be measured out to him. "Judge not, and you shall not be judged."

¹¹ See 1 Cor. 6:2. The rabbis, too, were against all appeal to pagan judges by Hebrews.

Clearly, two different worlds here open up before our eyes.

Hence the necessity—without denying the value of rabbinic literature for a philological and theological understanding of the Old Testament—of being acquainted with rabbinic principles of methodology in consulting passages of the Talmud. Thus, for example, the assertion of John 6:54: "Except you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood . . ." is not reconcilable with rabbinic teaching. The same is true in less important matters. Difference in method means, at least very often, if not always, difference in results and conclusions. For this reason St. Augustine advised us to inquire into the meaning intended by Scripture rather than to give heed to the opinions of the Hebrews. A modern scholar, Ewald, likewise remarks: "The law of association of ideas in cases where one word or idea recalls another word or idea seems to possess in these [rabbinic] commentaries a notable importance, and because of this the chief topic either receives no clarification at all or at any rate is not made as clear as it ought to be." Another illustrious scholar, Metzinger, calls attention to a further point of great utility in methodology, namely, that we may not always interpret passages from the Old Testament in the light of the New Testament; we must be careful to avoid exaggeration, such as that of the savant who affirmed that the Epistle to the Hebrews opens up the way to an understanding of Leviticus!¹⁹ In our opinion, the matter may be formulated in the following terms. From the chronological standpoint, the several

¹⁸ Adalbert Metzinger, "Die Substitutionslehre und das alttestamentliche Opfer mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von Lev. 17:11," *Biblica*, XXI (1930), iii, 1.

books of the Old Testament belong to definite epochs. We advance, in the order of time, from these epochs to the rise of rabbinic and New Testament literature. The animating spirit and the methodological principles, in spite of some similarity, are basically different. Even where, as we shall see later, the methodological canons correspond, their application varies considerably.²⁰ Hence we must examine the books of the Old Testament from the literary point of view as well as from the point of view of the facts narrated, and must study these books in our exegesis of the New Testament and of the rabbinic writings.

These latter are what concern us at present, and so we must have a knowledge of the principles of hermeneutics there followed, namely, those of the *middoth*.

3. *Kal wa-homer*²¹

During the first Christian era the term *middoth* was used by rabbinic Hebraism also to indicate the various forms of thought in the sphere of investigation. Men searched the text of the Bible with great zeal to find answers to all the questions posed by life, in the realm of civil and religious jurisprudence, and in the carrying out of the commandments, ceremonial laws, and the like. The mind was stimulated and sharpened, but labored invariably on the basis of established rules. The work of reasoning had its fixed norms and its instruments of measurement and

¹⁹ We have here a transformation analogous to that encountered in the Greek idiom of the New Testament: not formation, but transformation. Many presumed Semitisms—formerly some 500 to 5000 were counted, now the estimate is from 50 to 500—belong to the vulgar Greek of that age. The energy of early Christianity is soon to be transformative rather than creative. Cf. Deissmann, *Licht vom Osten* (4th ed.; Tübingen, 1923), pp. 48 ff.

²⁰ In the following pages we shall use the abbreviation *KW* for *kal wa-homer*.

verification; in a word, it had its *middoth*. The *middoth*, therefore, were rules by means of which the words of Sacred Scripture were explained, interpreted, and adapted by deducing new applications. The *middoth* constituted the method of inferring the *halakah* (practical norm) from the biblical text, the manner of harmonizing ancient oral traditions of conduct with the text of the Pentateuch.²¹

One of the deductive norms that may be said to be basic goes under the name of *kol wa-homer*, which is usually described: *a minori ad maius*, and vice versa, *a maiori ad minus*.²² This form of logical thinking is also found in the Bible, as in civilized mankind generally. In Genesis 44:8 Jacob's sons say to the messenger sent by their brother Joseph: "The money that we found in the tops of our sacks we brought back to thee. . . . How then should it be that we should steal out of thy lord's house?" The reasoning is as follows: If we have refused to commit a misdeed of lesser gravity, that of keeping the money we found in our sacks, how much more would we guard against perpetrating a greater crime, that of stealing an object from the house; or: much less would we have carried off an object from the house.²³ In Exodus 6:12 Moses says to the Lord: "The children of Israel do not hearken

²¹ Already in the various *corpora iuris* found in the Pentateuch, we note the tendency to reconcile and harmonize the ancient legislation with the innovations and reforms imposed by the evolution and flight of time. Cf. Eissfeldt, *Einleitung in das A. T.*, p. 616.

²² According to Adolph Schwartz, the vocalization ought to be *kol wa-homer*, and this norm of deduction ought to be considered the equivalent of Aristotle's syllogism. On KW, see *Ozar Jisrael*, Vol. IX, 1924, 183 B ff., and Stark-Billerbeck, *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrash*, III, 223 ff.

²³ These two formal possibilities of deduction (which in their essential value come to the same thing) are accentuated in the biblical phrase made up of the two particles 'af ki, which mean sometimes "how much more," sometimes "how much less." Cf. Gesenius-Buhl, *Handwörterbuch zum A. T.*, p. 57 B.

to me; and how will Pharao hear me?" Similarly in Deuteronomy 31:27: "While I am yet living and going in with you, you have always been rebellious against the Lord: how much more when I shall be dead?" In Job 15:15 f. we read: "Behold, among His saints (angels) none is unchangeable, and the heavens are not pure in His sight. How much more is man abominable and unprofitable, who drinketh iniquity like water?"

Rabbinic literature has made ample use of KW, in the halakic as well as in the haggadic and moral spheres. We give a few examples. Hillel the Elder asks: "If the daily sacrifice, the celebration of which does not oblige under pain of extermination, suspends the Sabbath (that is, may be offered even on the Sabbath without fear of profaning the day of rest), may not the paschal sacrifice, which has to be celebrated under fear of extermination,²⁴ also suspend the Sabbath?"²⁵ R. Hanania, son of Gamaliel (ca. A.D. 120) said: "If a man who committed a single sin is put to death, how much more certain should we be that he who fulfills a single commandment will receive the gift of life!"²⁶ In the *m'khilta*²⁷ on Exodus 13:3 the question is asked: "What is the origin of the practice of pronouncing a benediction before meals?" R. Ismael (ca. A.D. 135) replies: "We may gather this by means of a KW. If we have the duty of pronouncing a benediction when we are sated, as we learn from Deuteronomy 8:10 ('That when thou hast eaten and art full, thou mayest

²⁴ Cf. Num. 9:13.

²⁵ Palestinian Talmud Pesahim VI, 33, A, 14.

²⁶ Makkoth III, 15.

²⁷ *Mekhilta*, a word that in Aramaic means measure or rule of deduction, is the title of a commentary (*midrash*), having a normative-narrative character, on the second book of Moses.

bless the Lord thy God'), does not the same hold all the more when we have the desire to eat and have before us the food which the Lord in His bounty has given us?"

In connection with Psalm 67:32 ("Ambassadors shall come out of Egypt; Ethiopia shall soon stretch out her hands to God"), a rabbi of the end of the second century explains: "A day will come when Egypt will offer a gift to the Messiah. If the latter thinks he ought not to accept it, the Lord will say to the Messiah: Accept it from them; they have offered hospitality to My children in Egypt. Immediately thereafter 'ambassadors shall come out of Egypt.' Then Ethiopia will draw, in its own favor, a conclusion *a maiori ad minus*: If they (the Egyptians), who have subjugated Israel, find so gracious a reception, the same will much more be accorded to me, who have not subjugated them. The Lord will say to the Messiah: Accept the gift from them. And so Ethiopia 'shall soon stretch out her hands to God.'"²⁸ A Mishnic doctor who lived around 150 B.C. advises: "Do not speak much with a woman. This means one's wife. All the more, then, a man should not spend much time in chatting with his friend's wife."

These forms of reasoning find their application not only in the legal, ethical, or narrative sphere, but also very frequently in discussions having a polemic character. A fine instance of KW applied to religious polemic and at the same time presenting a chain of deductions *a minori ad maius*, is found in a legendary account contained in Genesis Rabba 65. Jaqim of the city of Çereda was a nephew of R. José ben Jo'ezer of Çereda (ca. 150 B.C.), who is called "pious" in the priestly caste. Jaqim was out riding on the

²⁸ Cf. Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, I, 84.

Sabbath (a sign of apostasy), and passed in front of the gibbet on which his uncle was to undergo martyrdom. The nephew called out to him: "Look at this horse of mine, which my lord (that is, the pagan magistrate) has given me to ride, and look at your horse (the cross) which your Lord (God) has given you to ride!" The uncle answered: "If such (namely, your good fortune) is the lot of those who anger Him, how much more will be given to those who do His will!" The other retorted: "Was there ever a man that did His will more than you?" The uncle replied: "If a fate such as this falls to those who do His will, how much more will befall those who anger Him!" Struck by the warning words of his uncle and overcome with repentance, Jaqim inflicted on himself, with his own hands, the four death penalties known in Hebrew law: stoning, the pyre, decapitation, and strangulation. That is, he erected a stake to which he suspended himself with a rope, after setting fire to the pyre. Falling from the stake, his body impaled itself on a sword fixed in place beforehand, and a heap of stones that had been piled up beside it fell over on him under the influence of the fire, thus bringing about the stoning. The legend continues: Then José ben Jo'ezer, on the verge of death, saw his nephew's bier ascend into the air, and said: "He enters the garden of Eden (paradise) only a moment ahead of me."

The rabbis also made generous use of KW for the purpose of instilling a sense of kindness and charity. And often they took the Lord's attributes as their point of departure to induce men to follow His noble example. Already in Talmudic teaching we find the clearly announced precept: Adhere to, or follow, the *middoth* [attributes] of the Lord.

The Lord is kind and merciful; you, too, should be kind and merciful, as He is.²⁹ A contemporary of Rabban Johanan, R. Sadoc (A.D. 70), said on the occasion of a banquet given by Rabban Gamaliel II: "We are thankful to him who accords us hospitality, but there is one who is above Rabban Gamaliel, and even above the patriarch Abraham, who is a striking example of hospitality: the Divine Majesty. At every moment He sets food in abundance before all who come into the world, according to their needs, and He fills all the living as much as they desire; and not only the upright and just, but also the wicked who adore idols. Much more, then, ought Rabban Gamaliel to serve the learned and the sons of the Torah." In this example of the divine mercy and goodness, the speaker infers, through the medium of KW, the duty of pity and hospitality on the part of men.

At other times, however, an instance of human pity is appealed to, through a KW, when God is called on to show mercy. R. Tankhuma (ca. 380) ordered a public fast because of the lack of rain. On the third day this aim had not yet been achieved. Then he said: "My sons, have pity on one another, and the Lord will have pity on you." While they were distributing alms in generous measure, they saw a man giving money to a woman he had divorced.³⁰ The supposed evildoer was dragged before the master. The latter asked: "Why did you give her money?" He answered: "Rabbi, I saw that she was in great distress, and I was seized with compassion for her." Then R. Tankhuma raised his face to heaven and said: "Lord of the

²⁹ Tr. Shabbath 139.

³⁰ According to halacic standards, a man ought not to have direct dealings with a divorced wife.

world, if this man, who no longer had any obligation to support this woman, was filled with mercy on seeing her in distress, much more shouldst Thou, O Lord, of whom it is said: 'The Lord is gracious and merciful,' have compassion on us. Thou oughtest to take pity on us, sons of the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom Thou lovest." Straightway the rain fell.

This example is of special importance, because it supplies us with evidence that in the rabbinic world no hesitation was shown, at least during a particular period, of applying KW in matters of mercy, and not alone by passing from divine to human kindness, but also contrariwise.

At other times the rabbis appealed to the mercy God shows inanimate things or lower beings to infer, through the medium of a KW, the protection He surely would have accorded to man. Rabban Johanan ben Zakkaj (ca. A.D. 80) says, with reference to Deuteronomy 27:5 ("Thou shalt build there an altar to the Lord thy God, of stones which iron hath not touched"): "If, with regard to stones that were to serve for the construction of an altar, which in turn was to restore peace between Israel and his Father in heaven, the order is given: 'Thou shalt not raise up iron against them,' the same ought to hold much more for whoever makes peace between one man and another, between a man and his wife, between one city and another, between one nation and another, between one government and another, between one family and another. With all the greater reason ought they to have a life that is peaceful and protected from all evil."³¹

³¹ The prohibition against using iron to shape the stones destined for the construction of the altar is explained in the Haggada as an act of pity for the stones. In reality, however, from the historico-religious point of view, this command is part of a complicated set of precepts and prohibitions concerning

A haggadist of the third century tells of a priest who was living in hard economic straits, and who explained to his wife that the drying up of the follicles of the hair in a sick person indicated that he was struck with leprosy, the reason being that for every single hair God created a source of life; when the source dried up, the hair dried up too. The lady answered: "If the Lord has created a source of life for every single hair, would He not also have destined a source of life for you, who are a man, who have much hair, and who have to feed your children?" Heartened by these words of wisdom, the priest gave up the notion of emigrating to a foreign land in search of a new livelihood.

A Talmudic doctor remarks: "Have you ever seen a lion breaking his back as a porter, a stag drying figs, a fox engaging in commerce, a wolf selling pans? They all manage to eat without greatly worrying. And for what purpose were they created? To serve me. And I, in turn, was created to serve the Creator." Here an inference *a minori ad maius* is understood: if animals created to serve man are fed without worrying, is it not right that man, who was created to serve the Creator, should find sustenance without grievous worrying? But, the pious teacher adds, man has sinned, he has grown worse with his actions, and has thereby compromised his state of life. This is why he has to earn his bread in the midst of preoccupations.

As we readily perceive, the method of deduction *a minori ad maius* is not a peculiarity of biblical or rabbinic literature. The authors of the New Testament have also employed it extensively. In Romans 5:9 we read: "Much

the sacrificial cult and the service of the sanctuary and the Temple. Among the most important of such commands is the order to use in the worship, as far as possible, animals that were physically whole and perfect, and that had not yet been put to heavy labor.

more, therefore, being now justified by His [Christ's] blood, shall we be saved from wrath through Him." P. John Re translates: "Therefore, since we are now justified in His blood, we shall with all the greater reason be saved from wrath by Him." In Matthew 7:11 Christ says: "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven, give good things to them that ask Him?" Here the Gospel, in the same way as often occurs among the rabbis, uses a KW to argue from man's goodness to the undoubted goodness of God.

Another instance is found in Matthew 6:26 ff.: "Behold the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor do they reap nor gather into barns; and your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are not you of much more value than they? . . . Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they labor not, neither do they spin. . . . If the grass of the field, which is today, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, God doth so clothe: how much more you, O ye of little faith?" Again, Matthew 10:29 ff.: "Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore: better are you than many sparrows." As the passage from the Talmud quoted above shows, the idea that hairs are counted and that God has created a source of life for each of them, was widely spread among the people and had become public property.²² This is why the Gospel made use of it to strengthen its argument *a minori ad maius*.

²² On the basis of the similarity of sound between *sh'orah*, storm, and *sh'orah*, hair, the Babylonian Talmud Baba bathra 16 A, with reference to Job 38:1, reports the legend according to which the Lord said: "I have created many hairs on a man's head, and for every hair I have created a separate follicle, so

As we see at a glance, these last instances of KW have a close analogy with those we have already met in the doctors of the Talmud. In both spheres, animals frequently serve as terms of comparison, and the stressing of the divine mercy toward animals tends to bring out, or almost to entreat, divine mercy toward man.

An interesting KW, dealing with animal life, is also found in the letters of St. Paul. The Apostle asks: "Who planteth a vineyard and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Who feedeth the flock and eateth not of the milk of the flock? Speak I these things according to man? Or doth not the law also say these things? For it is written in the law of Moses: Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or doth He say this indeed for our sakes? For these things are written for our sakes: that he that ploweth, should plow in hope; and he that thresheth, in hope to receive fruit."²² In this reasoning we note that the Apostle appeals first to the "universal custom dictated by good sense and by the duty of justice,"²³ but that he does not fail to appeal also to Deuteronomy 25:4 and to the Gospel teaching, ac-

that two hairs may not have to draw from a single follicle. For if two hairs drew sustenance from one follicle [here we have evidently a medical belief popular at the time], they would dim the light of a man's eyes. And if one hair is not confused with another, could I have confused 'Iyyobh (Job) with 'oyebh (an enemy)? This question recalls Job 13:24: "Why hidest Thou Thy face and thinkest me Thy enemy?" However, the doctors of the Talmud propose another explanation: "I have created," the Lord is represented as saying, "many voices among the clouds (thunder claps) and for every voice I have created a separate path (Job 38:25: "Who gave a course to violent showers or a way for noisy thunder"), so that two may not meet on one path, for if this happened the world would be destroyed. And if I have not confused one path with another, could I have confused 'Iyyobh with 'oyebh?" See also *Alajan-gannim* (ed. Buber, Berlin, 1889), pp. 33, 89.

²² Cf. 1 Cor. 9:7-10.

²³ Thus remarks John Re, *Le Lettere di S. Paolo*, p. 102.

cording to which the apostolic laborer ought to receive from the faithful whatever is necessary for his sustenance.²⁴ And to give added point to this principle, he has recourse to a KW. "Doth God," asks the Apostle, "take care for oxen?"

This question, in scientific strictness, calls for an affirmative answer rather than for the negative answer the Apostle writes between the lines, for even in the Old Testament we are told that the just man knows the soul of his beast and wishes it well. And in the Decalogue we are commanded to see to it that an animal gets rest in the same way as we have a duty to rest ourselves and to provide for the repose of our family and servants. In Talmudic literature the just man is said to be recognizable from the fact that he does not sit down at table until he has seen to the feeding of his beast. But that God or Holy Scripture could have been concerned for cattle alone, seems to the Apostle a thing so unlikely as to be inadmissible; hence he supposes and asserts that God has man in mind.²⁵ In any event, he devises a KW to find in the Torah a support for his request for material aid for the apostles: if God, through the teaching of Moses, has imposed on us the duty of providing fodder for an ox in return for the labor of threshing, or if God wishes that he who plows and threshes should enjoy the fruit of his exertions, much more the faithful ought to

²⁴ See Matt. 10:9 f.: "Do not possess gold nor silver . . . for the workman is worthy of his meat." For that matter, we have already seen that the Talmud, too, considers it a duty "to serve the doctors and the sons of the Torah."

²⁵ Philo and others are not the only ones who pause over the idea that the Bible cannot recount futile things, and that consequently we must think of a deeper and more allegorical sense. Other writers belonging to diverse camps raise similar objections. The echo of discussions aroused in this connection is found in rabbinic literature. See Bergmann, *Jüdische Apologetik im Neutestamentlichen Zeitalter*, p. 46, n. 1.

provide the necessary food for the apostle engaged in carrying out his mission.²⁷

In the majority of cases, KW was used by the doctors of the Talmud for deducing norms of conduct from the Bible. If a certain thing is permitted or forbidden in the Torah, all the more ought some other such thing be permitted or forbidden. For example: in obedience to the prescription of the Torah, circumcision is performed on the eighth day; therefore, say the rabbis, even on the Sabbath.²⁸ With this rule established through a plainly deductive method, it could be adapted to the problem: Is the curing of a sick person on the Sabbath permitted, or does such a practice mean a violation of the Sabbath repose or even a profanation of the Sabbath? The following decision was reached: If the operation of circumcision, which affects only a part of the body, suspends or annuls the precept of absolute rest, with all the greater reason healing is permitted when the saving of an individual is at stake. Through the argument *a minori ad maius*, therefore, the curing of a sick person was permitted on the Sabbath, but only in the case of someone grievously ill, whose life was in danger.²⁹ When

²⁷ The rabbinic world also exalts the idea of aiding the scholar who spreads knowledge of the Lord's word. We learn this from the following passage in *K'thuboth*, 111: "He who helps a scholar from his own means, gains a reward as though he had united himself to the divine Majesty."

²⁸ Likewise the Falashas regularly administered circumcision on the eighth day, as Faitlovich notes (against Aeshkoly-Weintraub). But if the eighth day fell on the Sabbath, the act was performed on the preceding day. See J. N. Faitlovich, *Ha-halakheth hamish'aroth shel ha-falashim*, in the review *Tarbis*, Jerusalem, VII (1937), 1.

²⁹ The safeguarding of human existence and the defense of one's own life are duties so weighty that the involuntary killing of a thief caught in the act was not regarded as blood-guilt. See Exod. 22:2: "If a thief be found breaking open a house or undermining it, and be wounded so as to die, he that slew him shall not be guilty of blood." The reason is that the thief may have intended not only to steal, but also to murder the inmate of the house. In

aid was not urgently needed, the rabbinic writers held that curing on the Sabbath was forbidden. This was certainly not owing to any lack of feeling for the sufferers, for in the Mishnah of Shabbath we are informed that a light may be extinguished on the Sabbath whenever this is necessary so that a sick person can sleep. No, the reason is that in such circumstances people thought that immediate intervention was not indispensable, and that it was better to observe the very important precept of Sabbath repose.

Jesus, on the other hand, wishes to extend the permission to cure on the Sabbath to cases not involving any danger to life and to people chronically ill; and so, following the path traced out by the rabbis in their endeavor to sanction the principle that danger to life annulled the Sabbath, He likewise had recourse to a conclusion *a minori ad maius*, starting with the same subject of circumcision. After curing a paralytic who had been ill for thirty-eight years, He said, in answer to the reproof directed against Him for transgressing the Sabbath: "On the Sabbath day you circumcise a man. If a man receive circumcision on the Sabbath day, that the law of Moses may not be broken, are you angry at Me because I have healed the whole man on the Sabbath day?"³⁰

In the discussions between the Pharisees and Jesus, the matter of the Sabbath repose is the one that most often leads to dispute. This was not, as Rossi says, because "the question of the Sabbath was the most artful form of Pharisaic religiosity";³¹ rather it was because the law of the

general, of course, the shedding of human blood was a grave infraction of the divine law.

³⁰ John 5:12 f.

³¹ *Il Vangelo secondo Luca*, p. 157.

Sabbath observance was among the questions most minutely elaborated in rabbinic circles.⁴²

On one occasion Jesus asks: "What man shall there be among you that hath one sheep, and if the same fall into a pit on the Sabbath day, will he not take hold on it and lift it up? How much better is a man than a sheep! Therefore it is lawful to do a good deed on the Sabbath days."⁴³ There is a very notable, indeed, a decisive difference, between the method of the rabbis and that of Jesus. The former, to infer the licitness of saving a man's life with the aid of medicine, appeal to a provision found in the Torah, that is, the biblical precept of performing circumcision on the eighth day, and do nothing else than interpret it, asserting that circumcision may be administered even on the Sabbath, provided it is the eighth day after the baby's birth. Jesus, speaking of the case of a sheep falling into a pit on the Sabbath, makes no appeal to any biblical text, since not a trace of the rescuing of an animal on the Sabbath is found in the Bible; He refers in all probability to a rule that has a purely rabbinical character.⁴⁴ He evidently desires to open a breach in a halakic norm, and seeks thereby to score a point against the methodology and de-

⁴² The attitude of Jesus on the question of the Sabbath observance occupies Tertullian's mind again and again. See Bonaïti, *Tertulliano*, p. 14. On the relations between the Mishnah of Shabbath and New Testament teaching, cf. W. O. E. Oesterley, *Le Sabbath* (Paris: Payot, 1935), pp. 71 ff.

⁴³ Matt. 12:11 f.

⁴⁴ We find indications of similar decisions in the Talmud. A doctor living about A.D. 150 teaches that if a first-born animal falls into a pit on a festival day, an expert may climb down, examine the beast, and ascertain whether it may be slaughtered immediately for food. Then the decision is made either to draw it out or to leave it in the pit and feed it until the end of the feast. Here the question concerns the eventual work of rescuing an animal, to be done on a feast day and not on the Sabbath; and, as we know, the number of prescriptions to observe is greater for the Sabbath than for feast days, on which one was allowed, for example, even to kindle a fire and cook food.

tailed casuistry practiced by the rabbis. To combat His adversaries, Jesus makes use of their own weapons; if they have arrived at the decision that an animal might lawfully be rescued on the Sabbath,⁴⁵ or, to be more accurate, on a festival day, even though no text from the Bible commands such an act, how much more may one heal a man on the Sabbath without distinguishing between a serious illness and a lighter illness.

According to rabbinic authorities, a halakic norm deduced from the Pentateuch through an interpretation or comparison in the spirit of a KW, could at times be a point of departure for the inferring of a new norm, to serve as material of comparison for arriving at new conclusions, or to become a support, having a hermeneutical value, for a norm already in force.⁴⁶ But such a procedure could never be followed for overthrowing a halakic rule once established. Early Christianity, as we can gather from various passages in the Gospel of St. Matthew, whose exegetical labors may easily be reconstructed, seeks, by means of inferences *a minori ad maius*, to weaken the rabbinic decisions.

This is probably the reason why, at a certain point, we can note in rabbinic literature an opposition to the application of KW, wherever it starts out from kindness toward

⁴⁵ The principle guiding decisions about aid to be rendered to suffering animals on the Sabbath, is that of preventing the sufferings of living beings. The same principle inspires those who are confronted with similar decisions in our day. Thus, in the question debated in our own times among the observant Hebrews of Palestine about milking on the Sabbath, Rabbi Simeon Rozkowski, *Lishelath ha-halibbah beshabbath*, p. 15, is inclined to allow it, and is influenced by the question of the animal's suffering rather than by economic considerations.

⁴⁶ The norms, or *halakhoth*, as designated by the technical term, *nimnu wegimru*, were established after a count of the opinions of the doctors taking part in the discussion, and after a conclusion being reached on the basis of a majority of the votes cast.

animals to extol or move God's mercy. We get the clear impression that this attitude is directed against early Christianity. Perhaps also, at some given time, the rabbis began to perceive the abuse to which such a method was subjected on the part of the Hebrews themselves.⁴⁷ But much more probably the reaction was evoked by the attitude of the new religious movement, which undoubtedly intended, by applying KW, to emphasize other and diverse principles of kindness and love.

In fact, we read in Berakhoth 33 b: "Whoever says while at prayer, 'Thy mercy is moved by a nest of birds,' should be silenced." To understand why silence is imposed on one who prays in this fashion, we need do no more than underline the words, "nest of birds." If the person praying had not been interrupted, he would undoubtedly have continued: "How much more shouldst Thou have compassion on us!" Reference to the Lord's pity toward a nest of birds is made in Deuteronomy 22:6 f.: "If thou find as thou walkest by the way, a bird's nest in a tree or on the ground, and the dam sitting upon the young or upon the eggs, thou shalt not take her with her young, but shalt let her go, keeping the young which thou hast caught; that it may be well with thee and thou mayst live a long time." The rabbis lingered over this passage to emphasize the importance

⁴⁷ The doctors of the Talmud do not hesitate to touch a very sensitive nerve when they note that in general the casuistry based on logical deductions often anasses heaps of precepts, where the text of the Pentateuch serving as their foundation is too tremulous to sustain such a weight. In this connection the Mishnah Haggigah 1, 8 is notable: "The abrogation of vows (by a person versed in the Law) is a thing hanging in the air, for it lacks (in the text of the Torah) a basis to support it (there being question of a verbally transmitted tradition). The rules about the Sabbath, sacrifices on festival days, and the sins of infidelity committed in making profane use of sacred things, are like mountains suspended from a thread, because the text is limited and the rules (deduced from it) are many."

of the prohibition, saying it could not be transgressed even for the purification of a leper, for whom, according to Leviticus 14:4 ff., a sacrifice of birds was enjoined.

Moreover, they drew from the same text a conclusion *a minori ad maius* that set in relief the duty of keeping the commandments, the foundation of the whole Hebrew life: "If, for the observance of a prohibition that involves the value of an *as* (a very small coin), the Torah says: 'That it may be well with thee and thou mayst live a long time,' much more does this hold for the graver and more important precepts of the Torah."⁴⁸ The masses, however, made use of such reasoning to call down the divine mercy with a KW, which they formed mentally, but which they surely would have uttered aloud if the words had not been cut off in their mouths.

The prescription of the rabbinic authorities to silence those who prayed this way evidently tended to abolish a mode of reasoning which, although originally instituted by them, had become the property of Christianity, and which was employed to exalt mercy above justice, and pity above the observance of the precepts. And this the rabbis did not wish. They preferred to give up logical deductions in dealing with the goodness of God, rather than allow anyone to undermine the edifice, so laboriously built, of their numberless practices. When early Christianity, by means of KW, began to break into the halakic rules that had been established after so much study and had been taught and introduced into the sphere of conduct with such effort, the rabbis forbade the formulation of a KW even when the Hebrew in his prayer did not try to improve on the rules and did not so much as dream of doing so. They gave orders

⁴⁸ Babylonian Talmud Hulin, XII, 5.

to silence the voice of whoever in his prayer recalled the divine mercy toward a nest of birds, and they forbade anyone to employ a logical procedure in arriving at an affirmation of the divine goodness, in order to prevent an excessive stressing of the Lord's love to the detriment of the observance of the ceremonial law.

We may gather together the results obtained from an examination of all the passages from the Talmud and the Gospels where a KW occurs, and formulate the following conclusion.

KW is a form of logical inference common to all human minds, and is therefore found in the Bible. Here we are considering it so far as it constituted a hermeneutic rule in the rabbinic schools for deducing from Sacred Scripture further precepts and prohibitions, or halakic norms of conduct. This didactic method was also applied in the course of discussions about the divine attributes.

The difference noted between the use of KW in rabbinic literature and in the New Testament seems to us to come to this: in the New Testament KW occurs with great frequency when there is question of accentuating the divine pity, and never, as we can easily ascertain, with nomistic designs. Indeed, at times it is used with the evident intention of lessening the importance of inferences made in the casuistic field. Whereas the rabbinic masters sometimes employ a halakic norm to derive another, the New Testament literature takes as its starting point a halakic norm already fixed, and proceeds to place it in the shade in favor of the idea of giving greater prominence to the virtues of the heart than to a material observance of precepts. At other times the New Testament literature takes as its point of departure some text from the Penta-

teuch which rabbinic writers had used to establish a halakic norm, in order to come to a teaching about the Lord's kindness.

Although the doctors of the Talmud affirmed and kept on affirming the divine mercy, they set themselves against the formulation of this truth through inferences already used for normative purposes; they saw this as a danger threatening the complex accumulation of their halakic patrimony. And they were all the more zealous in their opposition inasmuch as they knew their oral halakic teaching to be no less ancient than the norms contained in Sacred Scripture, as J. H. Weiss has shown.⁴⁹ Indeed, an oral tradition is clearly supposed in the very precepts contained in the Pentateuch. Every menace taking shape against this extremely ancient collection of practical norms, so excessively multiplied by rabbinical authors, was vigorously resisted. This is why—so far as we can judge from the glimpse of the matter we have caught—they were ever ready to give up the application of hermeneutic rules, such as KW on the subject of the divine mercy and love, although they themselves formerly employed them, in order to preserve intact their halakic patrimony. The authors of the New Testament literature, as it seems to us, strike out on a path leading in a diametrically opposite direction.

4. DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE PHARISAIC TEACHING AND THE GOSPEL TEACHING

The ceremonial law frequently becomes the source of sharp disagreements between the rabbis and Jesus. Jesus

⁴⁹ *Dor dor u'dorshaw*, I, 6 ff.

scrupulously observed, if not all, at least some of the religious precepts. He wore fringes at the corners of His robe and celebrated the Pasch according to the Hebrew rite. However, He did not attribute excessive importance to questions of rites and forms, or to discussions based on subtleties in the field of casuistry. He taught that, by observing these minutiae, one may succeed in straining out a "gnat," but will end by swallowing a "camel."⁵⁰ According to the rabbis, on the contrary, it is by neglecting the war against the gnat that one ends up by swallowing a camel. There is a polemic savor in the teaching given in the Maxims of the Fathers (*Abhoth*), that a "light precept" is to be observed no less than a "heavy" one, because the fulfilling of one precept facilitates the fulfillment of another. The Torah and its numerous precepts have as their purpose, according to rabbinic teaching, the purification of Israel. "Sanctify yourself even with what is permitted to you": so teach the doctors of the Talmud. The observance of so many commands, study of the Torah, prayers, blessings, fringes on garments, phylacteries on the arm and the forehead, strict observance of the Sabbath, alms to the poor, the offering of tithes, were in the mind of the Pharisees so many golden threads able to bind man to God.

The people instinctively felt that Jesus did not ascribe any great importance to outward observance, and asked themselves whether the forms in which religious thought found external expression could be done away with. The doctors of the Talmud, although recognizing that the form in which religious life is expressed was subject to change, and although preparing the way for this evolution by their

⁵⁰ Matt. 23:24.

varying interpretation of biblical texts, felt that observance of the moral law, which is a universally human law, was not enough to keep the character of the Hebrew people alive, and insisted on strict observance of traditions and on respect for ceremonial law. These factors did not impede the practice of turning to God and of charity; in fact, the rites and precepts were a continual reminder of God's will and of the duty of sanctifying one's life. The two basic laws of the Old Testament, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart" and "Thou shalt love thy friend,"⁵¹ could be followed without prejudice to the observance of all the biblical and rabbinic prescriptions.

That Jesus was not of this view, that He did not wish to give weight to the traditional usages and the rabbinic prescriptions, is clear from several passages of the Gospel. For example, He said: "Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man, but what cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man" (Matt. 15:11). The rabbinic teachers also say that a man should always try to express himself in blameless language; yet they hold to the observance of the precepts governing the use of food. When Christ's disciples are accused of plucking ears of corn on the Sabbath, He defends them and says in justification of them: "The Son of man is Lord of the Sabbath" (Mark 2:28). These reasons were likely to arouse bitter controversy. To calm the apprehensions of the rabbis respecting the preservation of the laws, the declaration of Jesus could hardly be sufficient: "I am not come to destroy. . . . One jot or one tittle shall not pass of the law."⁵² Assuredly! He

⁵¹ Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18. Cf. Matt. 22:37 ff.

⁵² Matt. 5:17 ff.

did not intend to abolish anything, but wished His teaching to complete and surpass the "justice" of the scribes and Pharisees.⁵³ To achieve this aim He needed forms of expression that would be new, more exalted, richer in charitable sentiments. To preserve "wine"—another metaphor dear to Jesus—new wine-skins were required; the old skins could not contain the new wine which, having to expand, would end by bursting the walls.⁵⁴ Nomism had to give way to the doctrine of the law of a more intensive and extensive love.

Numerous examples show that many of the maxims mentioned by Jesus already existed, in embryonic form, in biblical and Talmudic teaching. The advice given by Jesus, not to be excessively preoccupied about daily needs since God provides for every one of His creatures, advice which He illustrated by the poetic comparison with the lilies of the field, has a clear counterpart in the rabbinic saying: "He is a man of little faith who, still having some bread in his cupboard, asks: 'What shall I eat tomorrow?'"⁵⁵ The rabbinic adage, "He who gives life gives food," is also known. As to the Lord's love for plants, indicative of His love for mankind, ample precedent is found in the Book of Jonas.

Common to rabbinic and Gospel teaching is the idea that God loves all His creatures without exception. The Psalmist sang in his day: "The Lord is sweet to all, and His tender mercies are over all His works" (Ps. 144:9). God allows all men without distinction, not only the good but also the wicked and the idolatrous, to share in the mani-

⁵³ Matt. 5:20.

⁵⁴ Matt. 9:17.

⁵⁵ Sotah 48 B.

festations of His love. The statement in Matthew 5:45, that the Father "maketh His sun to rise upon the good and bad," likewise finds its perfect counterpart in a rabbinic saying according to which God makes the sun to rise over all, and causes rain to fall on the just and on the unjust, on the Israelites as well as on other peoples.⁵⁶ An interesting incident, in which the divine Majesty is directly compared with the sun, is found in Sanhedrin 39 A. The emperor says to Rabban Gamaliel (ca. 90): "You say wherever ten Hebrews gather together to pray, the divine Majesty is present. But how many divine majesties are there?" Then Rabban Gamaliel calls one of the emperor's servants and strikes him. The emperor asks him why he does this. "Because," replies the doctor, "the sun penetrates into the emperor's palace and ought to have prevented the act." The emperor objects: "The sun shines on the whole world." The conclusion follows naturally: if the sun, which is one of God's innumerable servants, is in the whole world, the same is all the more true of the divine Majesty Himself.

Even the prayer, "Our Father," composed by Jesus,⁵⁷ is Hebrew in the strictest sense of the word. In the Aramaic form of the daily prayer, the so-called *kaddish*, which contains extremely ancient elements and derives its inspiration from very ancient sources,⁵⁸ we read: "May the exalted name of God be sanctified in the world He has created according to His will; may His kingdom come and His dominion be acknowledged." In the Talmudic treatise, Berakhoth 29 B, we find: "May Thy will be done

⁵⁶ See Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, I, 374. Other parallels are given in Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, pp. 379 f.

⁵⁷ Matt. 6:9 ff.

⁵⁸ Ezech. 38:13; Berakhoth 21 B, and elsewhere.

in heaven on high; give tranquillity of spirit to those who fear Thee on earth, and bring to pass what is pleasing to Thee. Blessed be Thou, O Lord, who hearest our prayer." And farther on: "May it be Thy will, O Lord our God, to give to every man enough for his sustenance, and to every being what is needed. Blessed be Thou, O Lord, who hearest our prayer." These phrases correspond perfectly to those contained in Matthw 6:10 ff.⁵⁹

When Jesus teaches: "You have heard that it was said to them of old: Thou shalt not commit adultery. But I say to you, that whosoever shall look on a woman to lust after her, hath already committed adultery with her in his heart,"⁶⁰ He gives expression to a doctrine that, although preserved in a passage of the Midrash belonging to a later age,⁶¹ was certainly not taught for the first time around the year 250, but goes back to an ancient thought: "Do not say that he alone who materially violates the matrimonial bond is called an adulterer; also he that violates it with a look is called adulterer." The notion of the eye and the heart that commit sin is extremely old in Israel. In Numbers 15:39 we are warned not to follow our "own thoughts and eyes, going astray after divers things." The commandment, "Do not covet," is a rabbinic *gader*,⁶² and represents a prohibition that in itself seems to aim at eliminating a harmless thing, but in reality seeks to pre-

⁵⁹ See the rich material gathered in *Jahrbuch für jüdische Geschichte und Literatur*, 1906.

⁶⁰ Matt. 5:27 f.

⁶¹ Cf. Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, I, 209.

⁶² *Gader* literally means a hedge, an enclosing wall. Even in ancient texts the word seems to have taken on the metaphorical meaning of "protection." On this subject, see G. Ricciotti, *Storia d'Israele* (1934), II, 128; Andrés Fernández, "La voz *gader* en Esd. 9, 9." *Biblica*, XVI (1935), 82-84; H. Kaupel, *ibid.*, pp. 213 f.; G. Ricciotti, "La voce *gader* è un passo di Flavio Giuseppe," *ibid.*, pp. 443 ff.

vent infractions of basic gravity. Among the teachings that try to prevent even remote defilements of desire respecting the wives of others, attention may be called to that contained in the Babylonian Talmud Nedarim 20 A: "A tradition⁶³ says: 'Do not converse too much with a woman (Maxims of the Fathers), for you will end by falling into adultery.'" In a discussion of this text, a doctor of the third century adds: "Rabbi Aha, son of Rabbi Oshia, says: 'Whoever looks at a woman ends by committing a sin, and whoever gazes intently at a woman's heel will have ill-bred children.'" Subsequently reference was made anew to an ancient teaching gathered from Exodus 20:20: "That the dread of Him [God] might be in you." This verse alludes to modesty. And what follows, "And you should not sin," means: "The Torah teaches that modesty leads to fear of sinning." The doctors continue: "It is a good sign for a man if he feels shame." Others, referring to the same verse of the Torah, say: "Every man who shows he has modesty will not easily sin, and whoever has not the sense of shame imprinted on his countenance can be certain that his ancestors were not found at the foot of Mount Sinai."⁶⁴

Even in those teachings of Jesus which at first sight seem quite new, we can find parallels between the thought of the Gospels and that of the Old Testament. When we read the doctrine presented in Matthew 5:39: "But I say to you not to resist evil, but if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other," the figure so grandly depicted in Isaias, of him who offers his cheek to the strikers, is summoned up before our imagination.

⁶³ Of Tannaitic character, hence belonging to the period extending up to A.D. 200.

⁶⁴ An accurate examination of the contents of this discussion is found in Fleibig, *Der Talmud*, pp. 63 ff.

As regards the invitation to renounce one's goods voluntarily, we note that the *watteran*, that is, a person who of his own free will gives up his possessions and rights, is a figure known also to the rabbinic world. However, the doctors of the Talmud add this instruction: "Whoever distributes his property in consequence of his sorrow for the fall of the Temple, should not distribute more than a fifth of it." If this is not, as in the teaching of Jesus, an absolute renunciation of all one's goods, since the Law sought to guard against the practice of giving up all one's possessions, it is at least the renunciation of a part of them. If there is a difference of degree, the principle remains the same.

Accordingly the moral teaching of Jesus often coincides with that of the rabbis.⁶⁵ Sometimes the substance of the doctrine remains while the form changes; sometimes the conformity extends even to the outer form. When Jesus speaks of the "kingdom of heaven" as the reward appointed for this or that class of virtuous men, He is using a typically Hebrew phrase.⁶⁶ Even the expression, "One jot or one tittle shall not pass of the law,"⁶⁷ which occurs in the Sermon on the Mount, is found in Talmudic literature. Indeed, as long as a century ago Nork observed—and he was not the first to do so—that not only those Gospel doctrines that seemingly differ from rabbinic teaching, but even those that are absolutely contrary, in reality exhibit, here and there, points of contact with currents of Hebrew thought.⁶⁸

⁶⁵ It was Klausner who brought to light the harmony between Jesus and the rabbinical writers in the sphere of moral teaching.

⁶⁶ Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 245.

⁶⁷ This remark shows that in Christ's time square script was already in use. Cf. Eissfeldt, *Einleitung in das A. T.*, p. 699.

⁶⁸ *Rabbinische Quellen und Parallelen zu neutestamentlichen Schriftstellen*.

In spite of such similarities, however, an abyss opened up between early Christianity and the rabbis. And the abyss kept on widening. Although Jesus, as we saw in connection with the application of the KW, modeled His teachings on the rabbinic pattern and followed their very method, He came to a point where He had to leave the path marked out by them to reach a different goal.⁶⁹ An example occurs in Matthew 5:23 f.: "If therefore thou offer thy gift at the altar, and there thou remember that thy brother hath anything against thee, leave there thy offering before the altar and go first to be reconciled to thy brother; and then coming thou shalt offer thy gift." The doctors of the Talmud, too, asserted and repeated, in interpreting certain passages of the Bible, that a man will not be pure in the Lord's sight until he is reconciled with his comrade, and that the Lord will not pardon him until he has changed his hatred into charity and love.⁷⁰ But the form of the doctrine as set forth in the Gospel calls to mind another case which is treated by the rabbis, and to which, in all likelihood, Jesus wishes to allude: "If a person goes to offer the paschal sacrifice and remembers while on the road that he did not destroy all the leavened bread left in his house, what should he do? If he cannot go back home and return in time for the offering of the sacrifice, let him mentally annihilate the leavened matter."

In the Gospel literature, as is well known, unleavened bread becomes the symbol of candor and truth, which is

⁶⁹ The biblical exegesis in use among rabbinic writers as well as that of the New Testament, though moving in different directions, aims at a subjective rather than an objective interpretation of Scripture. On this question see A. Metzinger, "Die Substitutionstheorie und das alttestamentliche Opfer mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von Lev. 17, 11," *Biblica*, XXI (1940), 159-87.

⁷⁰ *Mishnah Joma* V, 9.

opposed to the ferment of malice and wickedness.⁷¹ When Jesus speaks of leavened and unleavened bread, He has in mind, not the material substances, but moral values. To have left fermented bread at home while a person is away to offer the paschal sacrifice does not give rise to danger; the danger lies in the failure to destroy the ferment of resentment and rancor. But when the rabbinic writers, who on a thousand other occasions had exalted truth⁷² and combated malice, speak of the necessity of destroying the *hames* (leavened matter), they mean the literal observance of the rite. In the Gospel teaching, therefore, the polemic note is undoubtedly prominent, and the rabbis discern therein a strong threat to the observance of the ceremonial law.

At bottom the teaching of Jesus on this occasion is based, though in a veiled way, on an inference *a minori ad maius*. If He had wished to speak more plainly He would have said: "If you hold that he who goes to offer sacrifice ought to return home if he has not previously destroyed the leavened bread, or at least ought to annihilate it mentally, the person who bears in his heart the leaven of rancor, which is far more dangerous than leavened bread, ought with all the greater reason to refrain from offering sacrifice." This sort of procedure weakens the authority of the

⁷¹ In Gal. 5:9 St. Paul says: "A little leaven corrupteth the whole lump." John Re, *Le Lettere di S. Paolo*, p. 206, comments: "Be on your guard; a little evil leaven can corrupt the whole mass, a tiny spark can cause a disastrous conflagration." In rabbinic literature leaven is regarded as a weakening element, a ferment of evil; and this is not bad leaven, as Re arbitrarily adds, but leaven as it is in itself, as the Apostle rightly indicates. In a text of the Talmud we read: "We are aware that we wish to serve the Lord and carry out His commandments; but the leaven which is in the dough prevents us." The play on words may be noted here: Do not ferment the *m-s-w-th*. This word is vocalized *misroth*, commands, and also *masroth*, unleavened cakes.

⁷² The Talmud says: "The seal of the Holy One (may He be blessed) is truth."

ceremonial law; people could come to this conclusion: therefore what really matters is the leaven in the heart. The biblical law, crystallized as a rabbinic rule, of destroying leavened bread in Hebrew homes on the vigil of the Pasch, runs the risk of being relegated to the shade by the reasoning that the elimination of leaven from the heart is an affair of much greater moment.

The differences between the rabbis and Jesus are also clearly accentuated in the formula used by the latter: "But I say to you. . . ." Thus, for instance, we read in the Sermon on the Mount: "You have heard that it hath been said: Thou shalt love thy neighbor and hate thy enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies . . . and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you."⁷³ The law of loving our neighbor we find in the Old Testament.⁷⁴ But as for the admonition to hate an enemy, we have to distinguish between an enemy of the nation, for whom at times the law of extermination was imposed by the Lord's command, as in the case of Amalec,⁷⁵ and a personal enemy, about whom no such command exists. Love for an enemy—and a personal enemy is meant—is recommended and taught by Jesus alone. In Exodus 23:5 we read: "If thou see the ass of him that hateth thee lie underneath his burden, thou shalt not pass by, but shalt lift him up with him." As we see, there is no hint here of rekindling hatred. We are told in Proverbs 25:21: "If thy enemy be hungry,

⁷³ Matt. 5:43 L. According to M. Grünfeld, "Judentum und Bergpredigt," *Freie jüdische Lehrerstimme*, n. 5 and 6, Vienna, 1913, II, p. 69, Jesus actually said: "Love thy neighbor and do not hate thy enemy." Christ would not have been content with a neutral attitude toward an enemy, but demanded a genuine love for him. Grünfeld's idea finds no support in the text.

⁷⁴ Lev. 19:18.

⁷⁵ Exod. 17:8-16. This precept is explained by the fact that Israel is the Lord's chosen people, and so Amalec becomes the Lord's enemy.

give him to eat." According to R. Meir, the Lord expressed this thought to Moses: "Be like Me: in the same way as I render good for evil, do thou also render good for evil."⁷⁶ In any case, we can readily comprehend the method used by Jesus, a method of controversy which was also used by the rabbis on occasion, and which stresses the growing disagreement between the contending parties: by attributing to one's adversaries different, and sometimes presumed, doctrines, that were the opposite of what they wished to inculcate, one's own principles are made more prominent. Jesus desires to emphasize the duty of positively loving one's enemy, a duty which, rightly or wrongly, the rabbis did not intend to teach. To give His own teaching the character of a perfect antithesis to rabbinic doctrine, He attributed to the doctors the maxim of hatred for enemies. Or again, Jesus may well have meant something like this: "You have often heard it said that a friend should be loved, and an enemy hated; and this is but human. Yet I say to you, love even your enemies."

In the Talmudic treatise, Shabbath 116 B, the following anecdote is related. Imma Shalom, wife of Rabbi Eliezer (ca. 90), and sister of Rabban Gamaliel II, consulted a "philosopher"⁷⁷ about a matter of inheritance shared between herself and her brother. After presenting a golden candelabrum to the master, she said to him: "I wish my share of our paternal inheritance." Her brother objected: "It is written that where there is a son, the daughter does not inherit; for we are told: 'When a man dieth without a son, his inheritance shall pass to his daughter' (Num. 27:8). But as long as the brother is alive, his sister does not

⁷⁶ Midrash Rabba, Exodus 26:2.

⁷⁷ This undoubtedly refers to a follower of Jesus.

inherit." The philosopher replied: "But from the day you went into exile, the Torah of Moses has lost its binding force. You must follow the Gospel, which says: 'Son and daughter are to inherit in common.'"⁷⁸ The next day Gamaliel brought to the philosopher an ass of a highly-valued breed. This time the wise man answered: "The Gospel also says: 'I am not come to take anything away from the Torah of Moses, but to make certain additions to it.' I have found the declaration for you: 'If there is a son, the daughter is not to inherit.'"⁷⁹ Thus was coined the saying: The ass has crushed the candelabrum.

In this narrative we have an evident allusion to the assurance given by Jesus: "Do not think that I am come to destroy the law or the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill."⁸⁰ The polemical note is made clear by the fact that the adversaries wish to portray Jesus and His disciples as judges in civil matters, and, what is worse, as judges open to bribery. This assuredly does not correspond with the Gospel teaching. In Luke 12:14 Jesus replies to a man who had invited him to arbitrate in a question of dividing an inheritance: "Man, who hath appointed Me judge or divider over you? . . . Beware of all covetousness; for a man's life doth not consist in the abundance of things which he possesseth." In Matthew 5:40 Jesus exhibits His contempt for earthly interests: "If a man will contend with thee in judgment and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him." Hence we cannot admit that Jesus or His disciples had any ambition to act as judges in questions of inheritance. Here the rabbinic writers un-

⁷⁸ As far as we are aware, no such pronouncement is found in the Gospels. The maxim might have validity as referring to the equality between man and woman in the kingdom of heaven.

⁷⁹ Matt. 5:17.

justly ascribe to them attitudes they certainly had no intention of assuming. This the rabbinic writers do for the purpose of stressing the opposition between their respective theories and of setting the teaching of Jesus in an unfavorable light.

The Talmud itself, as is known, distinguishes various classes of Pharisees. In their scale of values, they descended from men whose hearts were sincerely turned toward God, to persons who were actually idlers. The Pharisees themselves were aware of the existence of these contemptible characters in their midst, and in a certain way pilloried and reprendered them. Jesus, however, makes no distinction, and in His contempt pronounces a condemnation that embraces all the Pharisees: "When thou dost an almsdeed, sound not a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets."⁸⁰ We can see from these words that the atmosphere was charged with misunderstandings and hostility.

Matthew 5:21 f., in connection with the commandment of the Decalogue, "Thou shalt not kill," adds: "Whosoever is angry with his brother, shall be in danger of the judgment."⁸¹ And whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council. And whosoever shall say, "Thou fool,"⁸² shall be in danger of hell fire." Prescinding from the possibility that Jesus, in inveighing so explicitly against the habit of giving offense, may have been thinking of the insults hurled against Himself, we should note that the rabbis, too, urged the people to express themselves

⁸⁰ Matt. 6:2.

⁸¹ The heavenly judgment is probably meant.

⁸² The Greek *moros* corresponds to the *mora* used in rabbinic parlance in the sense of "stupid"; but similarity of sound also leads one to think of the Hebrew *moreh*, which means "rebel."

in becoming language, and to avoid not only obscene words but also vulgar words. Jesus reinforces the prohibition directed against the practice of insulting others, and regards it—following in this respect rabbinic methods of reasoning—as a *gader* of the kind that accompanies the prohibition of homicide so as to render the observance of the prohibition more secure. Apparently He means to say: "Just as the rabbis prohibit, for instance, the touching of a lamp on the Sabbath, or even the support on which it rests, thus forbidding a thing less serious in order to prevent the infraction of the law of the Sabbath observance, so I forbid any kind of insult against one's neighbor and all belittling of his personal dignity, in order to safeguard more effectively the commandment of not killing him." Jesus wishes all quarreling with one's brother to be suppressed in its very inception, because wrangling begets the word of hatred, and the latter in turn opens the way to deeds of violence. In the Maxims of the Fathers the rabbis say: "Let the honor of your neighbor be as dear to you as your own, that is, let it not be soiled by even one offensive word."

Another sphere clearly manifesting the divergence of ideas between the two religious currents is that of the liturgy. The rabbis exercised very careful surveillance over the manifold blessings and other practices of the liturgy celebrated by the various classes of the community. Similar watchfulness was exercised by the dualists, who believed in two powers, and therefore always doubled certain words in their prayers; and they issued warnings to those who read the text by proceeding from the last word to the first, probably for reasons of a magical character. From a series of documents of various kinds we can gather that at the

period of early Christianity the reading of the Decalogue, for polemical reasons, was detached from the daily liturgy, of which it had formed a part in ancient times.⁸³

Lastly, the deepest cleft of all separating the two currents of thought was the faith in the messiahship of Jesus and in His miraculous birth.

The chapters that most of all bring out the antagonism between Jesus and the rabbis are those containing the celebrated Sermon on the Mount. This discourse, according to Bousset, is "a great polemic directed against the legalitarian character of the Jewish religion."⁸⁴ When Jesus delivered it, He must have been well known among the Hebrews of Palestine, and must have drawn the attention of an immense multitude to Himself. But whatever the number of His followers, the number of His adversaries must also have been considerable. The sky under which the sermon was preached is thick with storm clouds. Jesus who, as we have seen, taught: "Love your enemies and pray for them that persecute you," did not hesitate to refer to the Pharisees as hypocrites, and foolish men, and blind guides.⁸⁵ To convince ourselves that the Sermon on the Mount must belong to a period when Jesus, along with His great fame and strong ascendancy over the crowds, had at the same time reaped a bitter harvest of envy and hostility, we have but to read the same discourse in the version given by Luke. We believe that a greater character of accuracy must be ascribed to the account as preserved in Matthew; nevertheless the version contained in Luke must reflect, if not the exact words of Jesus, at least the spirit animating

⁸³ Cf. Ellingen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, pp. 242, 254.

⁸⁴ *Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenistischen Zeitalter*, p. 133.

⁸⁵ Matt. 23:13-36.

the discourse. And in the discourse as presented by Luke, the eight beatitudes take the form of four beatitudes and four maledictions.

As we have seen, a remarkable agreement between the rabbinical principles and the principles of Jesus exists in the field of pure morality. But when we come to their teachings, that is, to matters involving reasoning, serious disagreements emerge. However, complete harmony rules in the sphere of prayer,⁸⁶ that is, in an activity in which the main factor is divine. When the soul makes ready to pour out its most intimate and profound thoughts, when it raises itself to a level whereon the creature and the Creator meet, in an immediacy that we may dare to call absolute, the noises of life cannot find entrance. And that is the height where all souls athirst for God meet. For this reason I thought I should explain the harmony of ideas and sentiments arising between the prayer of Jesus and certain pages of the Old Testament books and of rabbinic treatises. Here no discordant polemic note is heard; here the earthly life is in some way sublimated; here we are at that line of the horizon where earth and heaven melt into a single unity.

⁸⁶ About A.D. 200 Tertullian wrote of prayer: "Prayer is the defensive fortress of our faith, our military armament against the enemy who invests us on all sides. Therefore we never sail forth unarmed. Let us guard the banner of our heavenly King with the defense of the weapons of prayer. By day, on guard; by night, on watch. Let us heed the sound of the angelic trumpet. The angels also pray. Indeed, every living creature, in its own way, sends forth prayer. The animals pray and the wild beasts bend the knee; and coming forth from their caves at dawn, they raise their eyes up to heaven, and leap about in their fashion with gratitude and worship." All this can be easily matched by Hebrew thoughts on prayer. The root *krb* may be understood both as "to recite prayers," and as "war, fight." In a certain liturgical text the celebrants are said to draw near the Holy Ark to "do combat." Prayer connotes combat.

CHAPTER V

The Beatitudes

THE wonderful Sermon on the Mount, one of the fairest jewels in the Holy Gospels, is at the present time occupying the scientific interest of scholars.

The various ideas and expressions, as well as the order in which the beatitudes follow one another, are objects of investigation. Occasionally the discussion becomes animated, when the two "recensions" of the Sermon on the Mount, as reported in Matthew, chapter 5, and Luke, chapter 6, are compared.

Before taking up the difficult question of the "two recensions," we wish to preface a few remarks about some of the phrases occurring in the text, and some of the general appraisals of the discourse.

We recall Klausner's observation that the expression, "hunger and thirst after justice" (Matt. 5:6), is not very natural.¹ Yet Amos 8:11 speaks of a famine and thirst with regard to hearing the word of the Lord, which certainly is an expression connoting justice. The Psalmist likewise sings of the Lord who will judge the world with justice.

On the subject of "possessing the land" (Matt. 5:4), with reference to the "*nawim*, "the sweet-tempered," as Lagrange translates, the examination of the two elements

is undertaken by each critic separately. In Psalm 36:11, "the "*nawim* shall inherit the land," "land" is understood in the literal, material sense of the word. There is also question of a real possessing in Isaías 65:9: "And I will bring forth a seed out of Jacob, and out of Juda a possessor of My mountains: and My elect shall inherit it, and My servants shall dwell there." In Isaías 57:13 we read: "He that putteth his trust in Me shall inherit the land, and shall possess My holy mount." This hemistich does not go well with what precedes; hence modern critics consider it a later addition.² However, even if there is question of a later gloss, this witness is of great importance for us, as it offers us an analogon to Matthew 5:4.

In His discourse, Jesus speaks of the land in a symbolic sense, that is, of the heavenly abode, the kingdom of the spirit. In this connection Lagrange, with reference to Matthew 21:38 and Romans 8:19, shows that the verb *yarâsh* (to take in possession) never bears the meaning, in New Testament literature, of possessing in the literal sense.³ Similarly, as regards Matthew 5:4, where the influence of the Psalms is evident, the New Testament meaning differs considerably from the literal sense we noted in passages from the Old Testament. In the Old Testament the "*nawim*, the meek, will possess the land, for they will inherit it from the wicked, when the latter are destroyed and forgotten. In the New Testament the meek will receive the kingdom of the spirit as their possession, their inheritance, for God will number them among His children and will make them His heirs. The land promised to the meek, as Vincent Ceresi remarks, "is especially the heavenly father-

¹ Cf. Volz, *Jesaja II*, p. 211, n. 1.

² *Evangile selon Saint Matthieu*, p. 83, n. 4.

land, the true land of the living, toward which are turned the hopes of all those who do not resist the violence of unjust aggressors, and who lose ground daily in that land which is the scene of struggle for life and the conquest of the world."⁴

The Lord said to Moses: "Man shall not see Me and live" (Exod. 33:20); "I will show thee all good" (Exod. 33:19). He who sees the goodness of God sees God. Jesus said: "Blessed are the clean of heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8). This beatitude is found in Matthew alone.

There is question of seeing with the eye of the spirit. "Covetousness, avarice, iniquity, worldliness, are things that obscure, veil, and destroy the eye of the spirit" (St. Augustine, *Sermon LXXXVIII*, 6), whereas "the eye of a pure heart perceives the divine action, that is, sees God Himself 'in a dark manner.'"⁵

In Matthew 5:3 we read: "Blessed are the poor in spirit." In Luke 6:20 our Lord says: "Blessed are ye poor." Matthew alone has the beatitude about the clean of heart, and it is Matthew who uses the phrase, "poor in spirit." Alexander Haggerty Krappe takes occasion from this expression to speak of the "God of the weak."⁶ Observations of this kind do not, assuredly, advance knowledge very much.

We do well, for the moment at least, to prescind from the meaning of this phrase, and face the problem of the "two recensions," asking the precise question: Which is closer to our Lord's actual words? The usual answer is that Matthew spiritualizes. But is not such "spiritualiz-

⁴ "Benti mites," *Ecclesia* (Città del Vaticano), XII (1945), 566.

⁵ D. Mandrone, "Benti mundo corde," *ibid.*, pp. 580, 582.

⁶ *Mythologie universelle*, p. 338.

ing" equivalent, in some cases at least, to changing the word of the divine Master? And why does Luke omit, among other things, the beatitude, "Blessed are the clean of heart?" Are we to say that Matthew inserts this beatitude in order to spiritualize, and that Luke does not include it in order not to spiritualize? And let us ask further: Why does Luke continue: "Woe to you that are rich . . . woe to you that are filled . . . woe to you that now laugh . . . woe to you when men shall bless you" (Luke 6:24 ff.)? And why does Matthew omit all this? These four "woes" are not at all opposed to the spiritualizing process. What motive led him to omit them? And when one of the Evangelists reports a saying and the other omits it, do we have or do we not have the echo of the Master's word? And did the authors of the Gospels feel that they could spiritualize at this or that point, according to their own good pleasure, or did they not? Were they not wholly intent on transmitting the words and teaching of Jesus, rather than on giving deliberate expression to their own ideas?

If we take only Luke's text into consideration, the question presents itself: From the viewpoint of architectonic construction, did Jesus begin His discourse with the beatitudes only to end up with the "woes"? Did not custom favor the psychologically correct and heartening system of ending with a blessing rather than with a harsh and threatening admonition? Does not the Psalmist end his warning with the words: "Blessed are all they that trust in Him" (Ps. 2:13)? Is not the same convention followed in Isaías 30:18? Does not Psalm 136 also close with a beatitude, although with a sad one? Do we not find the same in Psalm 83:13? Certainly there are some compositions that begin with a beatitude or that insert one in the text; but in such

cases they contain no "woes." We should further note that such "woes" occur frequently in *Isaias* (chap. 5 and often elsewhere), and we find them in *Amos*, *Jeremias*, *Sophonias*, *Habacuc*, and *Zacharias*.

The beatitudes, as they follow one another, are in their form and contents a doctrine that is most personal to Jesus. For example who, prior to Jesus, ever said: "Blessed are the clean of heart," etc.? Jesus Himself, apart from the Sermon on the Mount as reported by Luke, repeatedly uses the formula, "Woe," in the discourse against the Pharisees in Matthew 23:13-33. And does it not seem likely that Jesus would have begun, rather than ended, His speech with the familiar formula, so as later to soar to the most sublime forms of His oratory, instead of following a descending order as He unfolded His discourse?

Even a man as devout, learned, and prudent as Monsignor Primo Vannutelli, finding himself face to face with unsurmountable difficulties, thinks that the discourse in Matthew is made up in large part of "borrowings" and "additions." Since *Isaias*, as we learn from the first verse of chapter 61, was sent to preach to the "poor," Lagrange inclines to the theory that the words "in spirit" are an addition of Matthew's. But then, if the beatitude about the clean of heart were an addition, we should have to say that the addition surpasses in sublimity the discourse itself, which no one would be willing to admit. Vannutelli remarks: "Certainly if St. Luke, the merciful, had found in his sources these two beatitudes about forgiveness and mercy, he would hardly have passed them over in silence." Excellent. I hold it as certain that St. Matthew did not find them—he would not have added them! Vannutelli concludes: "I should like to note, lastly, that I believe I have

perceived in these beatitudes some traces of variant versions." In all such variant versions—with due respect to the illustrious author of sainted memory—I find it hard to believe.

In my opinion—and I am only suggesting a hypothesis—the discourse was divided into three parts. The "woes," that is, severe warnings, are addressed to the "rich," and consequently against economic oppression and neglect on the part of fortune's favorites to perform works of justice, as opposed to the "poor" to whom the kingdom of God belongs; against those who "are filled" now, as opposed to those who go hungry, but who will be filled; against those "that now laugh," as opposed to those who "weep now." The last "woe" is addressed to those who gladly receive praise but not blame, as opposed to those against whom all that is evil is spoken, untruly, for the sake of Christ (Matt. 5:11).

This last point of agreement between Matthew and Luke is of inestimable value, for it confirms the soundness of my hypothesis, which is unfavorable to the theory of variant versions, and considers the two passages, in Matthew and Luke, as mutually complementary. We hear an echo of the times. We are carried back to that period which led up to the declaration of "complete bankruptcy in the sphere of fraternal admonition among the Hebrews," as Billerbeck says; and he adduces solid evidence for his statement.

The woes and the beatitudes recounted in Luke reflect the social and economic life of Palestine in that era. Riches, satiety, merriment, flattery on the one hand, and poverty, hunger, misery, curses, and lies on the other. These two antithetical situations form the subject on which Christ

discourses in the first two parts of the Sermon on the Mount.

At the side of these two groups, marshaled under the banners of riches and poverty and experiencing all the consequences flowing therefrom, we find a third group, made up of those whom the preaching of Jesus has won over from earthly life and all its disturbing entanglements. They have succeeded in rising above all the wretchedness of life on earth; and poverty in this sense, poverty of vow, has penetrated into their spirit and pervaded their whole interior life. To them, the poor in spirit, belongs, according to the first beatitude in Matthew, the kingdom of heaven (and let Professor Krappe possess his soul in peace—they are decidedly not weak-minded). They experience great pain, they suffer from hunger and thirst after justice in an environment so dreadfully lacking in justice. These people, who love mercy, purity of heart, and peace, are persecuted and calumniated. Blessed are they, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven; they will be flooded with consolation and filled with justice; they will obtain mercy; they will see God and will be called children of God. They must submit to sufferings and all sorts of injustice and lying calumnies, which admit them into the company of the prophets of earlier ages, persecuted by those whom they loved and for whom they prayed.

In conclusion: the Sermon on the Mount, a true masterpiece of the Nazarene's oratory, has come down to us in its entirety; and may God be praised for so splendid a gift! The narratives of Matthew and Luke are not variant versions, but concomitant and complementary accounts that constitute a unified and unique discourse, just as He who uttered it is one and unique.

CHAPTER VI

The Salt of the Earth

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus, after declaring the eight beatitudes, urges His disciples to endure all persecutions and insults with holy joy, since they will have their recompense in heaven. He goes on to compare the disciples with the light of the world that ought not to remain hidden but should shine forth in the sight of men, and with the salt of the earth. At this point, according to Matthew 5:13, the Master adds: "But if the salt lose its savor, wherewith shall it be salted? It is good for nothing any more but to be cast out and to be trodden on by men."

A similar expression occurs in Mark, where, however, the discourse delivered to the disciples has a different character. Jesus reproves them gently and in a veiled manner for a quarrel that had arisen among them. Before concluding with the words, "Have peace among you," He says: "For every one shall be salted with fire; and every victim shall be salted with salt. Salt is good. But is the salt become unsavory, wherewith will you season it? Have salt in you" (Mark 9:48 f.). We find the same thought in Luke, chapter 14. Here the Master wishes to make known to the multitudes that whoever desires to be His disciple must give up all he possesses; and He ends His instruction with the words: "Salt is good. But if the salt shall lose its savor,

wherewith shall it be seasoned? ¹ It is neither profitable for the land nor for the dunghill, but shall be cast out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear" (v. 34 f.). With regard to this last phrase, the ancient commentators observed that it was added "to invite the hearers to see through the figurative language and penetrate to the meaning."

The choice Jesus made of salt as a term of comparison ought not to surprise us. Salt symbolizes wisdom, intelligence. In the treatise *Soferim* XV, 8, we are told: "The Torah is like salt, the Mishnah like pepper, the Gemara like spices. The world cannot subsist without salt or pepper or spices, that is, without the Scriptures, the Mishnah, and the Gemara." ² Moreover, according to the ancient Israelites, salt, having the power to arrest vegetation and retard putrefaction, is endowed with a strongly purifying activity. ³ This is precisely what Dussaud has in mind when he undertakes to explain, besides the miracle of Eliseus ⁴ and the use of salt on the newly born, ⁵ also the words of Jesus: "You are the salt of the earth." "This is not," he remarks correctly, "a banal metaphor borrowed from the idea of seasoning, which would not make much sense, but has a wholly different implication: you shall purify and regenerate the earth." ⁶ It is not without interest for our

¹ The term *ἀλεύθερος, sahetur*, in Mark 9:48, can bear the meanings, "will be seasoned," and "will confer seasoning."

² See Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, III, 23.

³ As Ehrlich has rightly pointed out in his *Randglossen zur hebräischen Bibel*, I, 386, the word *memullah* in Exod. 30:35 means, not "salted," but "purified, pure." We may add that the term occurs next to *tahor*, pure, and this, in our opinion, confirms the explanation given by Ehrlich. On salt as a preservative and a defense against diabolical influences, see also Scheftelowitz, *Alt-palästinensischer Bauernglaube*, pp. 78 f.

⁴ Cf. IV Kings 2:20 ff.

⁵ Ezech. 16:4.

⁶ *Les origines cananéennes du sacrifice israélite*, p. 92.

subject to note that the idea of salt also lends itself to the framing of clever sayings and anecdotes. ⁷

The teaching about the salt that loses its savor has given rise to discussion. Some insist that salt does not lose its savor. In the Babylonian Talmud, *Bekhoroth* 8 B, we read that Rabbi Yehoshua ben Hanania (ca. 90) was invited by the learned men of the Academy of Rome to deliver some original discourse. He accepted the invitation, and narrated events devoid of all plausibility. To the question, "How is such a thing possible?" he retorted: "It is precisely in this that my inventive genius is revealed." Finally someone asked him: "If salt loses its savor, with what shall it be salted?" He answered: "With a mule's placenta." The other objected: "But can a mule (a sterile beast) have a placenta?" And the Rabbi replied: "And can salt lose its savor?" Various authors have noted the polemical character of this anecdote against Matthew 5:13. ⁸ For our part, we wish to observe that the polemical note is rendered more prominent by the fact that in this passage from the Talmud the question directly concerns, not salt which has become insipid, as in the Gospel, but *milha'sri*, which in Aramaic means salt that is rotten, decayed, corrupt, offensive to the smell. We see that the doctors of the Talmud, perceiving the difficulty in the reference to salt that has become insipid, turned to exaggeration so as to make the dose more bitter, and used a still more inept adjective. If

⁷ This can be gathered from a passage in the *Midrash Rabba* on the book of Lamentations. An Athenian commissioned a boy in Jerusalem to buy him something of which he could eat his fill and still have something over to take along on his journey. The lad brought him a bag of salt, and when the man scolded him, replied: "I swear by your life that you can eat of this, have all of it you want, leave some over, and take it along on your journey."

⁸ See Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, I, 236.

someone had objected: "But how can you speak of decayed salt?" they would have retorted: "And how can anyone speak of insipid salt?"

St. Hilary has dwelt on the fact that in reality salt does not lose its savor.⁹ In St. Augustine's exegesis the declaration, "You are the salt of the earth," is designed to make us "regard as foolish those who seek to enjoy an abundance of earthly goods, or who, in their fear of being deprived of such, lose the eternal goods which men can neither give nor take away." The salt that has become tasteless signifies: "If you [disciples], who ought in some way to impart taste to the people, lose the kingdom of heaven through fear of temporal persecutions, who will ever be able to take your errors from you, seeing that God has chosen you to correct the errors of others?" By saying that tasteless salt is good for nothing but to be cast out and be trodden on by people, Jesus intends to teach: "Not he who suffers persecution, but he who, in his dread of persecution, becomes insipid through loss of virtue, is the one who is trodden underfoot by men. In fact, the only ones who can be trodden underfoot are those who are on earth; but he who in heart dwells in heaven, is not on earth, no matter how much he may have to suffer on earth."¹⁰ This truly elevated and moving exegesis is deserving of all praise. However, it tends to explain the contents rather than the text of the teaching.

Most modern commentators of the Gospel refrain from treating the passages in question. Klostermann devotes some attention to it.¹¹ However, he does not pause at the

⁹ See Lagrange, *Evangile selon Saint Matthieu*, p. 88.

¹⁰ Cf. Tonna Barbet, *Il Vangelo commentato da S. Agostino*, pp. 106 f.

¹¹ *Das Markus-Evangelium*, p. 97.

verse we are examining, but occupies himself with the preceding text: "For every one shall be salted with fire, and every victim shall be salted with salt" (Mark 9:48).¹² This means, as he affirms in alluding to Wellhausen, that every disciple must undergo a process of purification: as fire purifies by consuming what is evil, so salt purifies by preserving what is good.¹³ The statement, "Salt is good," would refer to a possession that all ought to try to preserve; as far as the disciples are concerned, this signifies the purifying and preservative power that makes them fit for the apostolate. According to some, the exhortation, "Have salt in you and have peace among you," would have the purpose of engendering unity between the Hebrews and the pagans converted to Christianity.

Perles, in his study of the passage in Luke, chapter 14,

¹² In the Bible, as is well known, salt may not be omitted in the sacrifices. Ezechiel specifies the use of salt in holocausts. This testimony clarifies the passage in Lev. 2:13: "In all thy oblations thou shalt offer salt." On the practice of sprinkling salt on sacrifices, see also Ezech. 43:24 and I Esd. 6:9. In Lev. 2:13 mention is made of salt in its function of "salt of the covenant." The covenant with Israel is designated as "covenant of salt" (Num. 18:19; II Par. 13:1) in conformity, as Blome says (*Die Offermatrie in Babylonien und Israel*, p. 250), with the Oriental custom of ratifying a pact by the eating of salt by the contracting parties. By this they probably intended to sanction the permanence of the pact. Perhaps the salting of the sacrifices was meant to signify, at least in part, the preparation for eating. The quantity of salt to be used is never indicated; the reason is undoubtedly that in ancient times the quantity would be gauged by the amount required to season the food. In the Babylonian Talmud of Menaphoth the observation is made that sacrifices offered to the Lord ought to be salted; and just as the sacrificial rite cannot be celebrated without the priest, so it cannot be celebrated without salt. Here, in a fashion, a moral function is conferred on salt; that is, a parallel is established between the activity of the sacrificing priest and the salt sprinkled on the flesh to be sacrificed. On the use of salt in the sacrificial rite, see also Vincent, *La religion des Judéo-Araméens d'Éphrasîne*, pp. 208 f.

¹³ On the other hand, Dussaud (*Les origines cananéennes du sacrifice israélite*, p. 92) cites this passage, Mark 9:48, with reference to the notion of the ancient Israelites that salt is endowed with a remarkable destructive power, sufficiently analogous to that of fire, and he compares the text with Jer. 17:6, Deut. 29:22 f., Judg. 9:45, and Soph. 2:9.

does not touch on the subject of tasteless salt, but comments on the expressions which precede and follow it.¹⁴ According to him, Christ said, 'attun milha' d'tabhel, you are the salt that gives savor, not 'attun milha' d'tebhel, you are the salt of the world (of the earth), as the Greek translator wrongly supposed. We are not inclined to accept the emendation proposed by Perles. If Jesus had said, "You are the salt that gives savor," He would have been using a pleonastic expression, as everyone knows that the function of salt is to give savor. What He intended was to place before the eyes of His disciples the grandeur of the mission they were to discharge: the imparting of a renewed conscience to the world. As proof we may take the comparison immediately following, where there is question of the light of the world, not of the light that illuminates. In both cases the Greek text has accurately reproduced the Master's words: the disciples are the salt of the world and the light of the world.

On the other hand, we believe that Perles has successfully reconstructed the phrase: "It is neither profitable for the land nor for the dunghill," which in the Latin text of the Gospel reads: *neque in terram, neque in sterquilinium utile est.*¹⁵ He supposes that the original Aramaic was: *la l'tabhlā' w'lā l'zabhlā'*. This means: neither as a spice nor as compost. The Greek translator may have confused the Aramaic *tabhla'*, which means spice (a concept that can be applied to salt), with the substantive, *tebhel*, world. The original thought of Jesus would then have been: If the salt loses its savor, it is worthless either as a spice (for imparting taste to food) or as compost.

¹⁴ *Minutiae philologicae*, pp. 122 f.

¹⁵ Merk, *Novum Testamentum graece et latine*, p. 260.

Lagrange deals with the question we are examining. He notes that the objection raised by St. Hilary, who says that in reality salt does not become tasteless, holds only for salt in its purest state, sodium chloride, "but that commercial salt is soluble in humid weather and that consequently salt which has become insipid has no value for anything."¹⁶ Truly, salt exposed to humidity dissolves; but, we may be permitted to ask, does it on that account become tasteless? Does it cease to give savor to food just because it dissolves? And even if it did, can we imagine the possibility of re-salting the tasteless, dissolved salt?

Ludwig Köhler, in his article, "Salz, das dumm wird,"¹⁷ calls attention to a set of photographs reproduced by Frank Scholten, that show fragments of blocks of salt used to line the ovens in which the Arabs baked their bread, and which were obtained by evaporating a certain quantity of water procured from the Dead Sea. Other photographs show little heaps of salt cubes that had become inserviceable through long use, and had therefore been thrown into the street. E. H. Riesenfeld explains that the blocks of salt, employed to accelerate heating, gradually undergo chemical change, and then actually retard the heating. This is why, after some fifteen years, the lining is renewed and the material that had become unsuitable is cast out. "All this taken together," says Köhler, "gives us the first good explanation of the words of Jesus, words that up to now seemed puzzling and out of touch with reality."

We greatly appreciate the contribution of the scholar who has brought to our notice the material fact about salt as employed to line ovens and its eventual deterioration,

¹⁶ *Evangile selon Saint Matthieu*, p. 88.

¹⁷ *Zeitschrift des deutschen Palästina-Vereins*, LIX (1936), 153 L.

and we express our full admiration for the theory and acumen of the illustrious professor of the University of Zurich, who has performed so eminent a service in the field of Old Testament lexicography. Yet we do not think it probable that Jesus in His discourse was alluding to this technical detail in the baking of bread among the Arabs, or that He could hint at it with any confidence of being understood by all his auditors. Since chemical laboratories did not exist at that time as they do today, we should have to suppose that someone had sampled a piece of these blocks, that he had noticed it had become tasteless, and that knowledge of this fact was widespread. In our opinion Jesus, to enliven the comparison between the value of salt and that of the mission of His disciples in the world, employed a play on words rather than an allusion to a strange fact of plainly technical character.

A play on words will impress itself at once on the minds of all and will remain in the minds of all. This is why Jesus uses this device generously to obtain the effects He desires in the field of oratory and moral teaching.

In the present study we wish to show that the word "salt," *m'lah*, lends itself to a play on words, and on this basis we hope to infer what may have been the thought Jesus expressed in Matthew 5:13.

To reach our conclusion, an examination of a passage contained in *Kiddushin* 29 B will perhaps not be useless. In the necessity of deciding whether the opportunity of dedicating oneself to a study of the Torah should be given to a father or to a son, the following norm is observed. If the son is talented, "salted" (*m'mullah*), and consolidates what he has learned, or does not forget it, he has the preference. *M'mullah*, salted, from the verb *malah*, Aramaic

m'lah, here means clever, sharp. The form *maluah* occurs in Talmudic literature, especially in the Palestinian Talmud,¹⁸ and has the meaning of "salted (object)," particularly "salted food." Thus, for example, the story goes that when the Hebrews were on the march into exile and begged for water to quench their thirst, their enemies gave them *m'lukhim* (plural of *maluah*), that is, salted foods, and then, to ridicule their discomfiture, handed them leather bottles blown up with air.

Another treatise of the Palestinian Talmud narrates that John Hyrcanus, to celebrate a victory, invited the doctors of Israel to a banquet and said to them: "Our fathers ate *maluahim* when they were busy in building the Temple. Therefore we, too, wish to eat *malluahim* in memory of our ancestors." Here, undoubtedly, the term, which differs from the preceding one only in the doubling of the *lamed* (l), has a quite other meaning: the reference is to a plant, the orach, mountain spinach, whose leaves, having a faint flavor, served as food for the poor. John Hyrcanus is alluding to the time when the Hebrews, returning to their country after the Babylonian exile, were in a condition of extreme poverty, or, as others prefer, were constructing the tabernacle in the desert, where such herbs grow in profusion.

On the question of the term *malluah*, Job 30:4 is of particular importance. Job speaks of young men who once would have been delighted if he had honored them with a glance, and who now display every kind of rudeness toward him, taking advantage of his unprecedented misfortune. They are the young men who formerly were glad

¹⁸ Jacob Levy, *Neuhebräisches und Chaldäisches Wörterbuch*, III, 126, indicates some passages.

to pluck any *mallūah* and eat it. The Septuagint renders *mallūah* by *μολοχή* (Latin *malva*), a plant that grows profusely in the salt marshes and on the coasts of the Mediterranean Sea and the Dead Sea, and which is known for its enervating qualities.¹⁹ The term in question corresponds to the Arabic *meliah*,²⁰ and indicates a thing entirely lacking in flavor. The Arabic *meliah* in turn is similar in meaning to the Hebrew *tafel*, spelled sometimes with a *taw*, sometimes with a *teth*, and signifying a thing that is unsalted, insipid. In Arabic, *tafel* denotes what is insipid *par excellence*, namely, sputum. On the basis of this, Yellin, with reference to Job 6:6, would attach to the Hebrew *tafel* precisely the meaning of an insipid, viscous plant, that puts one in mind of sputum.²¹ Accordingly, if *mallūah* corresponds to *meliah* (a thing lacking in flavor), and if *meliah* in turn corresponds to *tafel* (a thing, or specifically a herb devoid of flavor), *mallūah* too ought logically to have the meaning of a thing that is tasteless, unsalted.

In the two anecdotes recounted in the Palestinian Talmud, terms in common use occur in both cases; one (*maluah*) indicates a salted food, the other (*mallūah*), an unsavory food widely known among poor people. As we can readily see, a slight variance in pronunciation will easily cause confusion between the terms; but from the general tenor of the discourse the sense intended could quickly be grasped. However, in the Babylonian Talmud of *Jebhamoth* 63 A, we do not know which of the two meanings to ascribe to the term *milha'* that occurs there. The subject

¹⁹ Cf. Reider, *Contributions to the Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 273.

²⁰ This is noted by David Yellin, *Hiqre-miqra*, p. 69.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

treated is as follows. At the top of the page, reference is made to a debt contracted by a doctor, who thinks it absolutely indispensable to have a modest plot of ground to work, since a man who does not own a bit of arable land is not a complete man. At the bottom is reported the opinion of another doctor who is of opposite mind. He says: "A hundred *zuz* invested in commerce enable a person to have meat and wine every day, but a hundred *zuz* tied up in the purchase of a farm give one the opportunity of dining only on *milha'* and herbs." The interpretations of this passage do not agree. Some say that there is question of salt and herbs, others say that there is question of two kinds of inferior herbs, one of which would be our *milha'* (*mallūah*).

It is on this similarity of terms that, in our view, the statement of Jesus is based. The following is the way we imagine Matthew 5:13 may be reconstructed in the original Hebrew:

'Attem m'lah h-ares;
w'-im ham-maluah hu
. . . mallūah
ba-meh nimlah?

You are the salt of the earth;
and if the *maluah* (salted
thing) should turn out to be
(instead) a . . . *mallūah*
(insipid thing) wherewith
shall it be salted?

Jesus, who used to read prophetic passages in the synagogues with extraordinary effect on the masses, knew Hebrew well and had probably, in addition, often preached in Hebrew. However, remembering that at His time the language spoken in Palestine was Aramaic, let us endeavor to reconstruct the same verse also in that idiom:

'Attun milha' d'ar'a;
 milha' ki hawah . . .
 malluha
 (or: m'luha ki hawah
 . . . malluha)
 b'ma malhe leh?
 (or: b'ma immelah?)

You are the salt of the earth;
 if the salt should turn out to
 be like a tasteless herb
 (thing) (or: if the salted
 thing should prove to be in-
 stead a tasteless thing)
 with what shall it be salted?
 (or: what shall be used to
 season food?)

In both cases a very evident play on words emerges. If we succeed in grasping it well, the Master's thought stands forth vividly. He ardently desires to spread His message among the nations, but knows that He has to die before the glorious work is accomplished. To whom shall He entrust it? His disciples are the sole persons in a position to comprehend its entire spirituality. They are the salt of the earth; that is, each of them is (like the young man spoken of in the Babylonian Talmud Kiddushin), a *maluah*, a sharp, enlightened mind. But, if the *maluah* (the salted or intelligent man) should fail to be such and should prove to be a *malluah* (a tasteless herb that has never been salted, a stupid fellow), if, in other words, the trust He places in them should be found to lack a solid basis, if the disciples should be devoid of those qualities which He supposed present in them, if the agents He wishes to employ for giving life and expansion to His thought should turn out to be deficient and of a nature different from what had been envisaged, then how could His teaching be disseminated among the nations?

If such were to be the case, His mission would be completely ruined. If He were ever to come to the conclusion

that those He had supposed astute were after all insignificant and incapable men, the tragedy of His life would be more profound and painful.

The two words, *maluah* (*milha'*), salted, and *malluah*, an insipid vegetable, are phonetically so close that Yellin thinks there is question of the same word with antithetic meanings.²² This double meaning, and the fact that a single word with an identical, or almost identical, sound can be used to indicate two diametrically opposite qualities, are the basis on which Christ's pronouncement can rest. The play on words is obvious and is very attractive. Translated into another language, it immediately loses—the case warrants the expression—all its savor, and becomes inaccessible, or almost so, to anyone who cannot taste it in the original. Once we get away from the literal repetition present in the play on words, we lose contact with the true and genuine thought of the Master, and are plunged into absurdity, ascribing to Jesus a comparison that is out of touch with reality and that is so easy a prey to criticism—unless we are willing to admit Köhler's peculiar hypothesis, which is certainly not well known.

²² Yellin, *op. cit.*, pp. 25, 69.

CHAPTER VII

"Pearls before Swine"

In Matthew 7:6 we read: "Give not that which is holy to dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest perhaps they trample them under their feet and, turning upon you, they tear you." The ancient exegetes generally understand "dogs" ¹ to mean "implacable ravagers of truth"; in "swine" they see "unclean despisers of truth," or "devotees of filthy vice"; in "that which is holy" or rather in "holy things" they see "the sacraments," and in "pearls" they discern "the mysteries reposing in the revealed word like pearls in shells." The *Didache* (IX, 5) explains Christ's words as an allusion to the Communion supper, to which only those who have been baptized in the Savior's name can be admitted.² According to Chrysostom, the idea expressed in the passage is the following: "It is not seemly to impart to our enemies the august mysteries for which they are not prepared, and in truth this is a

¹ The term "dogs" occurs in Phil. 3:2 as a contemptuous allusion to the "Judaizers who sought to rouse dissensions in the Christian community of Philippi." Thus John Re explains the term, *Le Lettere di S. Paolo*, p. 348. According to St. Augustine's interpretation of Matthew, Christ, in saying that it is not good to take the bread of the children and cast it to the dogs, means Canaan by this last term. "Dogs" would then be a reference to the Gentiles. Cf. P. A. Tonna-Barthet, *Il Vangelo commentato da S. Agostino*, p. 225.

² Cf. Loisy, *La naissance du Christianisme*, p. 291. It is interesting to note that, according to the Torah, no uncircumcised person could be admitted to the Hebrew paschal banquet. The initiation rite of circumcision would here be replaced by the baptismal rite.

privilege they would not know how to value."³ Among the moderns, we need but recall the opinion of Lagrange: the disciples should not deliver a thing that for them is sacred to persons outside their group, for whom it would be useless, who would dishonor it, and who would very likely be stirred up to do them an evil turn.⁴

We agree with the view that this discourse aims at teaching the lesson that exalted and sublime spiritual gifts should not be offered to unworthy and unclean persons. Yet we do not go so far as to admit, with the *Didache*, that Jesus, in speaking of sacred things that are not to be given to dogs and of pearls that are not to be cast before swine, was actually thinking of baptism as an indispensable prerequisite for partaking of the Communion table. But in the present brief study we do not wish to dwell on the idea contained in the verse; rather we propose to treat of the text as such and of the terms chosen to give expression to the thought.

The first hemistich is worded in such a way as to remind us of the *parallelismus membrorum* characteristic of Old Testament literature. And in reality Lagrange, after calling attention to the fact that dogs and swine are unclean animals, especially to Semites, and are at the same time irritable, makes the following observation: a holy thing, in parallelism with pearls, is a concrete object; it is sacred and therefore precious; pearls are precious and therefore, given the parallelism, are sacred. Lagrange's thought is very clear and illuminating. He has framed it in a simple syllogism, and this appears to us highly commendable;

³ Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor evangelia* (Turin: Marietti, 1958), I, 129.

⁴ *Exangile selon Saint Mathieu*, ad. loc.

and from the parallelism already present in the text he draws the following conclusion: that a holy thing is a concrete and precious object, and that pearls are precious, sacred things.

Admitting that a holy thing is a concrete object, what is the thing in question? Michaelis, referring to Exodus 29:33 and Leviticus 2:3, supposes that the flesh of sacrificial victims is meant.⁸ But if biblical law prescribes that the flesh of an animal found torn to pieces (*t'reyah*) in the field is to be cast to the dogs,⁹ and is therefore unfit, "not fit," for human consumption, on the other hand, according to the Talmud, consecrated flesh (*kodashim*), even if it has become "not fit," is under no circumstances to be cast to the dogs.¹⁰ Besides, if Jesus had intended to command that sacred flesh should not be thrown to the dogs, He would merely have been repeating a well-known prohibition that had come down through rabbinic tradition; He would have been inculcating a strict observance of the ritualistic law, whereas we know that it is only in the field of morals that similarities between His teaching and that of the rabbinic doctors are found.

Moreover, if Christ had taught in the first hemistich the duty of treating the flesh of sacrificial victims with reverence and of not casting it to the dogs, the second hemistich would be in complete discord with the first and would offend the religious sensibilities of the people. Jesus, who was obedient to the sacerdotal law and who bade the cured leper to offer sacrifice as a testimony to

⁸ *Das Neue Testament*, I, 130.

⁹ Exod. 22:31.

¹⁰ See the material referred to by Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, I, 447: "All sacred flesh that has become unfit cannot be ransomed, for sacred flesh is not ransomed so that dogs may eat it."

"them," that is, to the doctors and priests,⁸ Jesus who asserted that He did not intend to change a single iota of the Law, would hardly have added to the rabbinic rule which forbade the throwing of sacred flesh to the dogs, a clause mentioning swine. Lastly, if we accept the idea proposed by Lagrange, that the "holy thing" which shares in the qualities of pearls must be a precious object, sacrificial flesh can hardly be seriously thought of.

But then, what could the Master have had in mind in mentioning "holy things"? Sacred furnishings? And which? Those belonging to the ministering priests? But were these at the disposal of the people? Or the sacred fittings of a Christian church that did not yet exist? Could Christ have been thinking of phylacteries? Or of the rolls of Sacred Scripture? In this last supposition, the idea would not have been very felicitous or aesthetic, and certainly would not have been able to win either the plaudits or the good will of the audience.

Furthermore the pearls, with their position in the parallelism brought out by Lagrange, must also be invested with a sacred character. But how could the pearls share in a character so exquisite and sublime? What idea could occur to the minds of the people when Jesus mentioned sacred pearls? If these questions are perplexing to the mind of a writer who of set purpose and with deep reverence studies the opinions of ancient and contemporary exegetes, they must have proved much more insoluble to the simple folk who heard Christ's words. How could they have grasped the latent meaning, the underlying implications of His discourse, if the words as considered simply in themselves were so far from being clear?

⁸ See the following chapter, "For a Testimony unto Them."

We believe that the words uttered by Christ were brilliant, full of life, fluent, logical, and easy to understand. And if, in the passage we are examining, the connection between the holy things and the pearls escapes us, we venture to suggest that such a state of affairs is owing simply to a lack of comprehension by the author of the Greek text of the Gospel. We have conceived deep misgivings about the accuracy of the Greek text, and are convinced that it does not render the words spoken by Jesus with complete exactness. The author of the Greek text, who evidently had before him the original Aramaic, has, we submit, misunderstood the text itself. But with the aid of the Greek translation we believe we are in a position to pick out the error and also to discover the reason for the misunderstanding.

The first term of the parallel is *rō ἀγιον*. The parallelism with "pearls" and the fact that most of the translators give, not "that which is holy" but "holy things," incline us to think that the text, too, ought to have the plural, for "that which is holy" would have made the utterance even more difficult and obscure, and would have expressed a concept which is altogether abstract and which we cannot imagine as meaning something cast before dogs even metaphorically. What could correspond in the statement to the words *rā ἀγια?* The sole idea we ought to entertain is that implied in *kadosh* (holy, sacred). We must carry it back to its Aramaic environment and think of the plural. And in this case the Aramaic gives us *kudshayya'*. Even the Hebrew term *kadosh* is associated by lexicographers with the Assyrian *kuddushu*, shining, pure.⁹ Undoubtedly all that is

⁹ For *kuddushu*, Bezold, *Babylonisch-Assyrisches Glossar*, p. 243, col. a, gives: pure (lamb), sacred, consecrated, consecration.

comprised in *kadosh*, holy, rises in the Semite soul from the idea of shining, pure. In Aramaic a kind of bifurcation occurs: we meet in that language the term *kudsha*, the holy one, and *kadasha'* or *k'dasha'*, plural *kadashayya'*, gold necklaces, thence gold rings, earrings, circlets for the nose, bracelets. For the words in Exodus 32:3, *nizme hazzahabbh*, circlets of gold worn in the ears, the Targum gives *kodashe dedahabba'*.¹⁰ Accordingly there is no doubt that a gold circlet is expressed in Aramaic by the term *k-d-sh*. In Christ's utterance as reported in Matthew 7:6, the term we are examining was, in our opinion, set down exactly in the Aramaic text with the letters *k-d-sh-yy'*.

Given the absence of vowels, the translator immediately turned to that concept which the root *k-d-sh* expresses throughout Sacred Scripture, that is, the idea of "holy," without even thinking of the worldly concept of "shining things, necklaces of gold," which, however, is very common in the Semitic languages and in Talmudic literature. This is how shining articles have become holy things.¹¹ In both

¹⁰ In Proverbs the word *nezem* means a circlet of gold worn in the nose. It is interesting to observe that the Hebrew *nezem* is linked by lexicographers with the Assyrian *nuzzumu*, to consecrate. Here, too, therefore, we have a junction of the two meanings, "shining" and "sacred." We take the occasion to note that the Arabic term *nazam*, jeweller, under the forms *Nadam*, *Neddam*, or *Nidlam*, has survived for many centuries as a cognomen among the Hebrews of Morocco. See Eisenbeth, *Les Juifs de l'Afrique du Nord*, p. 157.

¹¹ Apropos of *kudshayya'*, we may also recall the rite of *kiddushim*, whereby the groom gives to the bride, at the contracting of marriage, an object of some value (at a later date, a necklace made of precious metal), thus declaring her *mkudesheth*, that is, consecrated to him, and to him alone. In our opinion, it is to the rite of *kiddushin* that St. Paul refers, elevating the terms and the concept to a symbolic and spiritual level, when he writes in Eph. 5:25 ff.: "Husbands, love your wives, as Christ also loved the Church and delivered Himself up for it, that He might sanctify it, cleansing it by the laver of water in the word of life, that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish." On the eve of the nuptials, as is known, the bride must undergo a ritual immersion, so as to be purified by means of the bath, and is later

versions the allegorical meaning of the discourse is quite discernible and remains the same: the warning not to permit the unworthy to come in contact with spiritual values they are incapable of appreciating. But the symbolic image summoned up by the Nazarene is clear and coherent only in the text as reconstructed by us.

Thus on this occasion Jesus follows a rabbinic rule known to all, that is, the prohibition against casting consecrated flesh to dogs, but He presents it under a different aspect, to bend it to other ends. In place of the special reverence due consecrated flesh, He substitutes the special reverence due to the sacred things of the spirit. And in creating the rhetorical figure designed to make this thought clear, He employs, with consummate art, the same term as occurs in the rabbinic prohibition, but gives it the alternative meaning it is able to bear.

Since we are dealing with this passage of the Gospel, let us pause a moment on another detail. How did the living words of the Master sound when, after speaking of gold necklaces thrown to dogs, He mentioned pearls cast before swine? How did He express Himself? This hemistich is studied by Dalman, who, however, does not examine the first hemistich. He thinks that for "pearls" Jesus used the term *margeliyyata'*.¹² We doubt it very much. No one in the ancient Orient would carry loose pearls about with him; but women wore strings of pearls around their necks.

consecrated by the act of *kiddushin*. The Hebrew nuptial ceremony, as practiced in very ancient times and also during the time of Christ and His disciples, forms the real foundation on which, for this occasion, the edifice of Pauline oratory is erected. When St. Paul speaks of the sanctification following the purification with the laver of water, he is thinking of the baptismal rite, as St. Augustine observes: "The word is joined to the element, and the sacrament results."

¹² *Jesus-Jeschua*, p. 210. Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, I, 447, also thinks of *marganita'* or *marganit*.

Hence Christ was thinking of strung pearls, not of loose pearls. A string of pearls is called *haroza'*, plural *harozayya'* in Aramaic,¹³ and this makes a beautiful play on words with *h^ozirayya'*, swine. Jesus said to His hearers: "Do not cast strings of pearls before swine, do not throw your *harozayya'* to the *h^ozirayya'*." Such a play on words would really delight the people, would call forth their admiration, and would remain impressed on their minds.

To sum up, we are convinced that in this discourse the Nazarene said: "Do not give your *kadashayya'*¹⁴ (gold necklaces) to *kalbayya'* (dogs), and do not cast your *harozayya'* before *h^ozirayya'*. In Aramaic the verse would go like this:

*la titt^onun kadashayya' dikhon kome kalbayya'
w'la t^oremun harozayya' dikhon kome h^ozirayya'.*

The text as we have interpreted it in the Greek translation and reconstructed it in the original Aramaic, gives a clear meaning to all the elements of the comparison, and is not obliged to have recourse to syllogisms. Christ's utter-

¹³ On the word *haroz*, "necklace of pearls," and on the etymology of the term, see Nahum Sloush, "Explication de quelques termes en phénicien et en hébreu," *Revue des études Juives*, LXXXII (1926), 85 f.

¹⁴ Reverend Pietro Bocaccio, formerly a valued student of mine at the University of Padua, has written to me as follows regarding the plural postulated by me in place of *ra ḥyāa*, Origen, in his *Commentary on Matthew*, where he is apparently quoting, gives *ra ḥyāa*, but in commenting on Ps. 118 he quotes freely and gives *ra ḥyāa*. St. John Chrysostom, *In Matthaeum*, hom. I (PG, LVII, 22) has *ra ḥārēt ra ḥyāa*; in hom. XXXVIII (*ibid.*, 420) a quotation from memory occurs: *ra ḥārēt ra ḥyāa*. In *Epistola ad Hebreos*, hom. XX (PG, LXIII, 144) gives: *ra ḥārēt ra ḥyāa*. Among the spurious works attributed to St. John Chrysostom, *ḥyāa* is found in the *Homilia in S. Crucem* (the passage beginning: "Quid discam?"). St. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechesis VI, De Uno Deo* (PG, XXXIII, 583); *ob dei ḥārēt ḥārēt ra ḥyāa*. St. Athanasius, *Apologia contra Ariana* (PG, XXV, 268); *ra ḥyāa*. The same reading occurs in *De virginitate* of Pseudo-Athanasius (PG, XXVIII, 261). And *ḥyāa* is also given by Evagrius Ponticus, *Capita practica ad Anatolium* (PG, XL, 122). Von Soden also cites a whole series of texts having *ra ḥyāa*.

ance is wholly based on material elements. The necklaces of gold offer an excellent parallel to the pearls: *harozayya'* and *h^zirayya'* form a magnificent play on words. The plural endings of the Aramaic in *-ayya* make the verse sonorous and easy to remember, so that anyone hearing it uttered by the Master could never forget it. The words as issuing from the mouth of the Nazarene, thanks to the contents and the form, should have become, and in fact did become, an inalienable possession of the people of all times and of all civilizations.

CHAPTER VIII

"For a Testimony unto Them"

(Matt. 8:4; Mark 1:44; Luke 5:14)

THE eighth chapter of St. Matthew opens with an account of a leper's cure effected by Jesus with a simple touch of His hand and the words: "I will, be thou made clean." After the miracle has been wrought, Jesus says to the man restored to health: "See thou tell no man. But go, show thyself to the priest and offer the gift which Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them."

The Holy Bible of Cardinal Ferrari comments: "The allusion is to the Mosaic prescription (Lev. 14:2), according to which a cured leper, before being readmitted to the company of healthy men, had to obtain a kind of certificate of cure that was issued by the priests."

According to Leviticus, chapter 14, the priest, after satisfying himself of the cure by means of an examination, performs the rite of sacrifice. He takes two pure birds (i.e., birds that may lawfully be eaten) and immolates one of them, pouring its blood into an earthen vessel, over living water. The bird that is still alive is then dipped, along with a piece of cedar wood, a scarlet thread, and hyssop, into the blood of the dead bird. The cured man, namely, he who is undergoing the act of purification from leprosy, is sprinkled seven times. He next has to wash his

clothes, shave off his hair, and take a bath of purification. He may then enter the camp, but has to stay away from his own tent for seven days. On the seventh day the washing of his clothes, the shaving off of his hair, and the bath are repeated. On the eighth day two lambs are offered, and the tip of the man's right ear, the thumb of the right hand, and the large toe of the right foot are smeared with blood. Then some oil is sprinkled before the Lord. What remains of the oil is poured by the priest on the tip of the right ear, the right thumb, and the big toe of the right foot of the cured man. Lastly the oblation of the sacrifices at the altar follows.

The rite clearly involves the idea of expulsion. The living bird that was dipped in the dead bird's blood and then released to fly off freely through the fields indicates that the dismissal of the evil has been accomplished.¹ The banishment of the evil to a great distance is here signified.² The shaving of the hair is explained by the fact that the hair, like the nails, are parts of the body which are perceived to grow and which appear, in consequence, to be endowed with greater vitality and so seem to be habitats of demoniacal powers. By cutting off the hair, the spirit of evil is deprived of the possibility of remaining in the organism any longer. Another explanation of the cutting of the nails and the hair is the theory that people readily ascribe to such bodily elements the attribute of being in a special way the

¹ The rite of purification from leprosy is discussed with much acumen by Pettaromi, *La confessione dei peccati*, II, 163 f.

² The rite in question is of the same type as that of the scapegoat. Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, p. 171, mentions a similar rite according to which a widow, after the period of her widowhood, holds a bird near her genitals and then hurls it away, as though signifying that she is thus putting an end to the signs of mourning (growth of the nails, abstinence from bathing, etc.).

seat of vital forces. The sprinkling with blood and oil is a recognized feature of lustral rites. All these proceedings occur after the ascertaining of the cure by the priest. The sacrificial act, like the entire ritual, has the character of an official confirmation of the cure and the purification that have taken place.

The incident of the curing of the leper is contained also in Luke 5:14. In another episode, narrated in Luke 17: 12-19, there are ten diseased persons who beg the compassionate help of the Master, and He says to them: "Go, show yourselves to the priests. And it came to pass, as they went, they were made clean (the Greek text has *ἐκαθαρίσθησαν*). And one of them, when he saw that he was made clean, went back, with a loud voice glorifying God. And he fell on his face before His feet, giving thanks. And this was a Samaritan. And Jesus answering said: Were not ten made clean? And where are the nine? There is no one found to return and give glory to God but this stranger. And He said to him: Arise, go thy way; for thy faith hath made thee whole." Here we have the clear explanation of the prodigy: the cure has been effected in requital of faith. Otherwise, in fact, the lepers would never have gone to the priest, for they were well aware that he could not have given them the so-called certificate of cure if they were still diseased. Lagrange comments on this passage in Luke as follows: "They obey without resistance, and their obedience is rewarded. They are healed as they go, and before they have gone very far."³

In Luke's narrative the words, "for a testimony unto them," are completely missing. This phrase, however, is found in Mark 1:44: "Show thyself to the high priest and

³ *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, II, 77.

offer for thy cleansing the things that Moses commanded, for a testimony to them."

What is meant by the words, "for a testimony to them"?

In the Greek text the phrase reads: *εἰς μαρτυρίου αὐτοῖς*. Billerbeck says by way of comment that the cured leper is to bear witness in Jerusalem that he who cleanses lepers has appeared. If this were the case, we should have to suppose that the leper, on presenting himself for the offering of the sacrifices and for the ascertaining of his cure, had made known the name of the one who healed him. But we know, on the contrary, that Jesus expressly bids him not to say a word to anyone, just as He will later tell the blind men after curing them: "See that no man know this" (Matt. 9:30). Hence He did not wish to make His powers known. Still less did He desire to arrogate to Himself the priestly function of declaring the lepers cleansed. When He says to His disciples: "They shall deliver you up to councils, and in the synagogues you shall be beaten . . . for My sake, for a testimony unto them" (Mark 13:9), the expression undoubtedly, as Meyer observes,⁴ conveys the idea of testimony to be given by the faithful in favor of Christ, and at the same time it implies testimony against the infidels who will have to answer at the judgment seat of God. The disciples bear witness by speaking, by asserting; and they are witnesses and give testimony in virtue of their office. But in this case, Jesus says and predicts in express words: "Whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye."

On the other hand, in the episode of the cleansed leper, who certainly was not a disciple of His, Jesus orders: "See thou tell no one." Thus the cleansed leper does not give

⁴ *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums*, III, 520, n. 3.

testimony in the sense of bearing witness, and he is not and will not be an accusing witness before the divine tribunal, for he has not suffered for his faith in Jesus. The fact that Meyer, in discussing the text, "for a testimony unto them" in Mark 13:9, and in interpreting it in the sense mentioned by us, does not cite the case of the leper, shows *ex silentio* that the phrase occurring in the conversation with the leper does not possess, in his mind, the same meaning as in the discourse to the disciples.⁵

Luzzi believes that Jesus wishes to perform an act "attesting to the priests and the people how powerful a man has arisen, who is not opposed, however, to the Mosaic law but before all else pays it the reverence due to it." According to Lagrange, also, the scope of the expression is to "show to the sacerdotal class that Jesus does not intend to depart from the law—quite the contrary."⁶ Michaelis goes still farther. He thinks that Jesus is desirous of adopting a conservative attitude in view of Leviticus, chapter 14, and that He does not wish to be known merely for His cures. If we have rightly understood the mind of Michaelis, the words, "for a testimony to them," seemingly mean that Jesus sought to minimize the cure obtained by linking it with the priestly rite; He had no desire that the cure should occupy the chief place in the opinion that was being formed about Him, but preferred that, however miraculous, it should appear to be quite normal.

The suggestion that Jesus was greatly concerned to show Himself a scrupulous observer of the sacerdotal code does

⁵ The expression we are studying is found also in Mark 6:11, where, however, the situation is quite different and has nothing in common with the episode of the leper. For a clarification of this passage, see Klostermann, *Das Markusevangelium*, p. 57.

⁶ *Evangile selon Saint Matthieu*, p. 163.

not seem very probable to us. While remaining most loyal to the Scriptures, He always put great store on the value of the moral precepts contained in the Pentateuch, deliberately ascribing less importance to the *korban*, the sacerdotal sacrifice so dear to the traditionalists.⁷ When Jesus effects the *transfer* of the evil afflicting those possessed by devils, He does not hesitate to send the evil into the bodies of swine, that is, of impure animals.⁸ In the episode of the rich young man (Matt., chap. 19), Jesus is offered an excellent occasion for declaring which precepts of the Torah He pays homage to. Is there any question here of bloody sacrifices and of priestly sanctions? And which are the things Jesus regards as important in Matthew, chapter 23? And in Matthew 9:13 and 12:7 does He not insist that we should meditate deeply on the meaning of the verse from Osee: "I will have mercy and not sacrifice"? The Epistle to the Hebrews, which certainly is closer to the thought of Jesus than any commentary of a modern author, is sharply opposed to the "cult of the tabernacle";⁹ on the other hand, the "sacrifice of praise" and the "doing of good" are exalted, thoughts which, for that matter, are not rare in rabbinic teaching.

Jesus is closer in spirit to the prophets than to the sacerdotal code. And the prophets, as is well known, rise up with

⁷ See Matt., chap. 15.

⁸ This act vividly recalls the *transfer* of sins on the day of expiation. The herd hurls itself into the sea, somewhat like the scapegoat that is driven to a precipice in the desert, so that the evil may be annihilated together with the body of the animal. Note that the Syriac, *sh-h-r'*, herd or flock, is used to signify a herd of swine as well as a band of demons. Cf. Wellhausen, *Reste arabischen Heidentums*, p. 14.⁹ In connection with the notion of impurity, a whole series of circumstances is recalled that attest the importance of this animal in the sacrificial rites, the theology, the military life, the culinary art, and the anniversary of ancient Rome. See V. Aptowitzer, "Agadische Symbolisierungen und Identifizierungen," *Freie jüdische Lehrerstimme* (Vienna), V (1916), 2.

⁹ Heb., chap. 13.

special zeal against the sacrificial rite, although for motives lying outside the cult itself, that is, to lay greater stress on moral values and to prevent the people from finding in the scrupulous observance of the prescriptions a justification for acts of social injustice. In Isaías 40:16 the value of the sacrifices of animals seems to be somewhat belittled, not to say annulled. Jeremias 6:20 plainly repudiates them. Micheas, whose spirit is akin to that of Isaías in his messianic hopes, declares himself an open adversary of the bloody cult and exalts moral sacrifices. The Book of Jonas emphasizes the value of spiritual purification. It is superfluous to mention that the Psalms, so dear to Jesus, are all a glorification of the sacrifice of the heart. Besides, we know that the idea of animal sacrifice was beginning to be superseded even in the midst of Hebraism.

In our opinion Jesus, while revering the biblical law, could, like the prophets whom He surely knew and admired, combat the sacrificial cult or at least disclaim interest in it. He did not actually oppose it because, as Bousset had occasion to note, "His adversaries are the Pharisees and the scribes, not the priests, the ceremonial law, or the cult."¹⁰ Another reason for not opposing it was, as Elbogen well remarks, the fact that He ascribed great importance to the sanctuary of Jerusalem, and, "as long as the Temple stood, the ancient order of things was respected."¹¹ But refusal to adopt an attitude of hostility against the bloody cult does not mean that one is a zealous defender of it.¹²

In Zeitlin's opinion, Jesus was mindful of the legalistic

¹⁰ *Die Religion des Judentums im späthellenistischen Zeitalter*, p. 113.

¹¹ *Die Feier der drei Wallfahrtstage im zweiten Tempel*, p. 3.

¹² Stefano goes so far as to regard the cult of the Temple as unfaithfulness toward God. Cf. Meyer, *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums*, III, 272.

teaching of Hillel, according to whom a leper is not clean except by virtue of the cure that has taken place and of the priestly sanction. In His remarks to the cured leper, Jesus would have taken account of the following reasoning of Hillel: "If we found in the Bible only the phrase, 'the priest shall declare him clean,' we should interpret it in the sense that if the priest declares anyone clean, even though that person were not cured of leprosy, he is considered such and is restored to society. For this reason it is written: 'He is clean,' that is, a person is considered clean when he is cured of leprosy. The reverse is also true: if we had only the expression, 'He is clean,' the priestly sanction would be regarded as superfluous. This, then, is why we find in the Torah: 'The priest shall declare him clean.' " The final phrase, "for a testimony to them," would signify: "Offer the sacrifice in order that the priest may announce to the people that you are cured." The word, *αιροῖς* would mean the people, the multitude. Or, continues Zeitlin, we may read *αιροῦ* and explain: in view of his, that is, the priest's, testimony. Jesus would always act in conformity with the *halakah* cited, and the original text would be: "Show yourself to the priest for his testimony, and offer the gift prescribed by Moses."¹³

According to the *halakah*, the priest would base his judgment chiefly on the declaration of others that a cure had been effected. The rabbinic materials gathered in Billerbeck's work¹⁴ inform us that even an insane priest was able to give the sanction of "clean," provided that a "man" (that is, a competent person) should give assurance about

¹³ Zeitlin, "Un témoignage pour eux," *Revue des études Juives*, LXXX (1920), 79 ff.

¹⁴ Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, IV, excursus "Ausätzige."

the successful cure. For our part, we do not believe that Jesus attributed any such weight to Hillel's formalistic deductions, or that He shared the latter's reasoning.

Klostermann explains the words, "for a testimony to them," as follows: "Offer what Moses has prescribed, so that the people may be assured of the recovery." According to him, Jesus directs the leper to present himself to the priest for the purpose of being subsequently readmitted into society; but He did not wish by this action to make His power known or to attest His obedience to the law. Willam also supposes that the phrase means: "That (after examining you) they may testify to your recovery."¹⁵ Lagrange, too, seems to have a special testimony in mind.¹⁶ He says: "He is cured, but his legal position is not yet secure. The miracle does not dispense him from the obligation of having his cure verified by the priests. From them he must receive a certificate which he can show to everybody as a sort of testimonial that he has recovered his rights in society."¹⁷

¹⁵ *The Life of Jesus Christ*, p. 117.

¹⁶ *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, I, 133.

¹⁷ From the fact that Jesus orders the cured leper to show himself to the priest and to offer a sacrifice in the Temple conformably with the command of Moses, Klausner (*Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 363) argues that Jesus shared the national pride and the conviction about a chosen people so dear to other Hebrews, and that He paid homage to Hebrew separatism. The idea seems debatable to us; in any case it represents no contribution to an explanation of the phrase, "for a testimony to them." As often happens, in this instance also modern commentators are sometimes in agreement, more or less consciously, with ancient commentators. It will be interesting to give a few explanations from the Fathers of the Church. St. Jerome: "Jesus sends the leper to show His respect both for the Law and for the sacerdotal class, so that the priests, recognizing the miracle, may believe." Origen: "Jesus sends him to the priests that the latter may witness the miracle wrought, not by the prescriptions of the Law, but by a higher grace." Chrysostom: "In His actions Jesus sometimes submits to the Law and sometimes rises above the Law; the latter to lift men's minds up to a higher wisdom, the former to forestall gossip and to condescend to the weakness of minds still immature. The idea is not that Moses com-

All this is true. But the leper also knew very well that he had to have recourse to the priest to obtain the official declaration concerning the cure effected, for without this sort of health certificate (which assuredly was not a written document, as some authors believe, but an oral declaration) the priests and the masses would have considered him still contaminated, and he would not have been permitted to enter his house. Moreover, he would still have had to cry out, "Unclean, unclean," in a loud voice, so that all might avoid him. If the words, "for a testimony to them," had only the purpose of acquainting the leper with the reason for his duty of presenting himself to the priest, they would have been almost superfluous. To our mind, they were designed to bring out into the open the great contrast of ideas between Jesus and the followers of traditional views.

Jesus, in freeing a sick man from his "evil," wished him to be also morally redeemed. The notion of diseases current in the New Testament is of a predominantly demoniacal character; evil (sin) in its turn is identified with the demon (Satan). The weapon for combating the evil is faith in Jesus. Faith in Jesus, as He Himself teaches in word and action, brings both recovery of health and forgiveness of sins. Hence the recovery symbolizes the expiation accomplished, the purification obtained. The leper had faith in Jesus, and so the will of Jesus cured and purified him. Recovery and purification are effected at the same

manded the giving of testimony to them, but that the person cured should go to the priests to bear witness to them concerning the fact and his own reverence. We may also understand that the precepts of the Mosaic Law are an earnest of the truth that was later to be fully revealed and was to be productive of greater effects. Whether the priests believed or not, Jesus wished them to be ready to accept the truth. The rejected testimony will become an accusation against them, but grace cannot be held accountable for their sin." Cf. St. Thomas, *Catena aurea in quatuor evangelia* (Turin: Marietti, 1998), I, 143 f.

instant. As far as Jesus is concerned, the bloody sacrifice is no longer necessary and can be omitted. But for the doctors, the priests, the people, in a word, for "them," the leper, although cured, is not clean until the sacrifice has been offered. For "them" faith, the sanction that is valid for Jesus, has no value. And since the leper must go on living in their midst, Jesus tells him to go to the priest.

Therefore it is only from the practical point of view that Christ sees any need of conforming to the custom of securing the priestly sanction for the healing of the leper. Jesus both assents and dissents. The assent is formal; the interior dissent is revealed in the word *avtois*. This word, "unto them," implies: "Obtain the testimony that avails for those who do not admit any purification beyond that which is official and formal. As for Me, no such purification is necessary; to Me you are clean in virtue of your faith." Jesus has no intention of indicating that He shares, more or less, in "their" views. Nor does He wish to display His own power by the act He performs; indeed, He always tries to stretch a veil over the episodes in which His greatness shines forth with more than ordinary brilliance.¹⁸ But with the words, "for a testimony to them," He draws attention to the abyss separating Him from "them": there are two different ways of seeking recovery; two different ways of effecting a cure; two diametrically opposed ways of testifying to the cure that has been wrought. After the request for a cure has been granted, and after the cure itself and the purification have been accomplished in one world, Jesus wishes them to be accomplished in the other world, and according to the norms that avail for "them." For them; no longer for Himself.

¹⁸ Cf. Matt. 17:9.

When the paschal banquet is in progress, as we learn from Exodus 12:26, and the inquiring child asks: *Mah ha- "bhodah ha-zoth lakhem?*, "What is the meaning of this service for you?" the father answers by narrating the wonderful events that marked the departure from Egypt. In the course of the centuries a popular collection of sayings and stories about the departure, called *haggadah shel pesah*, gradually took shape. In one of these anecdotes, it is no longer an inquisitive child, but a vigorous dissenter, an absolute recusant, who puts the same question: "What is the meaning of this service for you (*lakhem*)?" The dry comment follows: "*Lakhem, w'lo lo*—for you (he asks), and not for himself, because he is excluded from the common life of Israel." Here a rabbinic writing shows how an innocent question has become, not only a declaration of dissension, but a word of strong denial. The same can be said of the reply. The calm answer given to the child in Exodus 13:8: "This is what the Lord did to me when I came forth out of Egypt," becomes polemical: "This is what the Lord did to me when I came forth out of Egypt: to *me*, not to *him*. If *he* had been there, the Lord would have given him no part in the redemption." Just one word is stressed, nothing more. "Unto them," *avrois*, stressed in the discourse of Jesus, draws a line of demarcation between two worlds. In saying *avrois*, Jesus leaves one world behind and enters another.

In the matter of ritualistic cleansing, we can indicate three cardinal points that enable us to trace the course of its development. In Leviticus, chapter 14, we have the priestly rite of cleansing. Once the cure had been wrought and the fact had been verified by the priest,¹⁰ the purifica-

¹⁰ According to rabbinic doctrine, the verification by the priests had become

tion was accomplished by endeavoring, through the visible and intelligible ritual, to bring about the expulsion of the evil and the immunity of the healed man by means of the lustration with blood and the anointing with oil.

In Ezechiel, chapter 36, a purification rite to be performed by the Lord Himself is spoken of in metaphorical language. As the result of sins committed, Israel is as impure as a menstrual flow of blood. The dispersion of Israel among the nations, a direct consequence of the sins committed, carries with it a profanation of the divine name. The Lord Himself will rise up: He will gather together the dispersed people and will pour clean water over them to purify them. The lustration will have as its effect, logically, a recovery that will not require anyone's verification. The lustration, the prophet says clearly, will not have as its effect the expulsion of an evil just overcome, but will produce a deep change in the spiritual constitution of the people: the people will lose their heart of stone and will receive a new heart. This change in their spirituality will be the source of a new prosperity. The fields will be covered with golden harvests, and the deserted cities will be rich with a lively and merry populace. All this, namely, the healing of the soul and the prosperity, will be a result of the purifying rite that has been performed.

The idea of purification which, in our opinion, is that of Jesus, represents a third type, different from both the first and the second. Jesus orders the ten lepers to betake themselves to the priest in order to obtain the official declaration testifying to their recovery. They obey with

almost a matter of form. As we have seen, even an insane priest was capable of pronouncing on the matter, provided a competent judge gave assurance that the recovery had taken place.

faith and go their way. Other sick people mentioned in the Gospels turn to Jesus with complete faith when they implore His aid. And He usually answers them as He answered the paralytic: "Thy sins are forgiven thee. . . . Arise and walk" (Matt. 9:2, 5). Here He evidently alludes to the notion of the prophets, that forgiveness of sins carries with it recovery of health and well-being. In the faith which Jesus has in His own heart and which He looks for in the hearts of others, there is no place for a special rite of a purifying character; for it is faith alone that confers the power to give and obtain healing.²⁰

In our opinion, Jesus is perfectly conscious that His notion of purification differs profoundly, not only from the Levitical catharsis, but also from that described, although in an allegorical discourse, by Ezechiel, a prophet of sacerdotal lineage and of strong sacerdotal tendencies. In the episode of the cured leper, Jesus emphasizes this divergence of ideas. If we grant that He accented the words "to them" in the phrase, "for a testimony to them," we can grasp His intimate thought: the Levitical type of ritual cleansing is necessary, but only for "them," for the followers of traditional persuasions. For Christ Himself, who has wrought the cure in virtue of faith, and for the

²⁰ The idea that faith in God is by itself a source of salvation is found also in rabbinic teaching. The word *mikweh* is susceptible of two meanings: "hope" and "a store of purifying water." In the biblical verse, "*mikweh* of Israel, the Savior thereof in time of trouble" (Jer. 14:8), the meaning "hope" goes well. But the rabbinic doctors give a haggadic interpretation and ascribe the second acceptation to the word: a store of purifying water is the Lord to Israel. As the *mikweh* (purifying bath) cleasess the unclean, so the Lord cleanses the unclean. Whoever has an unshakable faith in the Lord hopes in Him and awaits recovery and salvation from Him. This faith and this hope are the form of his purification, the first beginnings of his salvation. Faith in God is interposed as a point of intersection between a state of suffering and discomfort and a state of recovery and well-being. Here we find an analogon for the concept in the mind of Jesus.

lepers who, with hearts full of faith in Him, have called forth the act of miraculous, supernatural healing, the Levitical rite of purification is wholly superfluous.

The miraculous works wrought by Jesus possess a value designed to transcend the plane of natural events and rise to the supernatural. Their purpose is to attest that He, Jesus, is God's envoy and that He acts, as Origen says, in virtue of a higher power. This statement finds clear confirmation in John 5:36 f.: "The works themselves, which I do, give testimony of Me that the Father hath sent Me. And the Father Himself who hath sent Me, hath given testimony of Me." No man can work such prodigies unless God is with him (John 3:2). Through these works God speaks.²¹ What Jesus says is the word of the Lord, for He is the Word. What He does is the work of God. God speaks in His Son (Heb. 1:2) when He works in His Son. The sacrifice is for a testimony to them, to the priests; this act is God's testimony in favor of Jesus, in the presence of all generations of all times.

If, in fact, as we are told in Hebrews 9:13, "the blood of goats and of oxen . . . sanctify such as are defiled . . . how much more shall the blood of Christ . . . cleanse our conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?" And the Apostle continues: "Almost all things, according to the Law, are cleansed with blood; and without shedding of blood there is no remission." For Jesus, His own blood; for the priests, the blood of animals. Therefore the sacrifice of animals is offered "for a testimony unto them."

²¹ Cf. Bonaventure Rebstock, *Vom Wort des Lebens, Gedanken zum Johannes-Evangelium im Geiste der heiligen Väter* (2nd. ed.; Dulmen L. W., 1939), pp. 189 ff.

CHAPTER IX

"Let the Dead Bury Their Dead"

Matt. 8:22; Luke 9:60

THE ancient Hebrew who dwelt in Palestine had to try in every possible way to avoid leaving the Holy Land, so as not to come in contact with the paganism of neighboring regions and thus run the risk of losing his Levitical purity. If weighty reasons obliged a person to absent himself from the country, he had to ask his superiors for permission, that is, he had to perform the act of *n'tilath r'shùth*, of "obtaining authorization." If the answer was favorable, this act was followed by that of *n'thinath r'shùth*, the granting of authorization.

In the Palestinian Talmud, Sanhedrin VIII, 26 B, a saying of Rabban Johanan is reported: "If they invite you to take part in the council,¹ request permission to be released or to emigrate."² The reason is that the acceptance of public office in the Roman period involved great expenses and forced one to live and work in pagan surroundings. The Talmud also relates that Rabbi Jassa, on being notified that his mother had arrived at Bozrah, a locality situated on the border of the province east of the Jordan,

¹ Council, *βολεῖ*, is identified with *magistratus* by Graetz, *Geschichte der Juden*, IV, 237, n. 4.

² In the Theodosian Code, XII, 1, 16, we read: "Si ad magistratum nominati configerint, requirantur."

asked Rabban Johanan whether he could go to meet her, or whether he could leave the land of Israel. The master did not give him a clear answer. When the request was repeated, he said: "If you have decided to go, return later in peace." Since the disciple was a member of the priestly race and the laws of Levitical impurity were regarded as supremely important for those who belonged to that stock, we might think, with Klein,³ that only priests were obliged to ask the master for permission to go abroad. But a closer examination of the Talmudic evidence enabled Klein himself to conclude that the institution held for all.

The question was also asked in general: "Can a person leave the land of Israel, even with the intention of returning?" The answer took into account whether the trip abroad was made *birshuth*, with authorization, that is, *bir'son hakhamim*, with the consent of discreet men. In any case, however, the observance of the obligation was more strictly binding on the *koh'anim*, Hebrews of sacerdotal lineage, since the custom probably arose in priestly spheres. The class nearest that of the priests was that of the young men who devoted themselves to study under the direction of masters, with a view to being ordained rabbis some day. The ordination, which was generally conferred by the rite of laying on of hands, involved residence in the Holy Land, and could not take place except in Palestine. If a candidate lived abroad,⁴ where he had gone with the proper authorization and with the pledge of returning to his fatherland for the definite nomination, ordination could be conferred only in a conditional form.

³ "Aus den Lehrhäusern Erez Israels im 2.-3. Jahrhundert," *Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, LXXVIII (1934), 165.

⁴ As examples of what was meant by "abroad," Rome, Damascus, Tyre, and Gaza are mentioned.

We know for certain that the practice of securing authorization for a foreign voyage was very common in the Tannaitic period, or prior to the second century after Christ. But undoubtedly the institution was current even at the time of Christ, for it was still more necessary while the Temple of Jerusalem was standing and the fear of contracting Levitical impurity through contact with pagans was greater.

At a later period the practice extended farther, so that a disciple would not leave his master without requesting authorization even though he was going to remain in Palestine. And even today, in communities where the ancient customs are cherished, a pupil will go up to his master with the words: *birshuthkhem, rabbi*, "With your permission, my master," before setting out on a journey.

All these facts lead us to interpret in the same fashion the request which a disciple addresses to Jesus in Matthew 8:21: "Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father."⁵ In our opinion, the young man does not ask permission, as St. Hilary suggests,⁶ because he was already convinced in his heart of the authority of Jesus and of the duty of following Him. He simply goes through the act of *n'tilath r'shūth*; that is, he makes the regulation request which every disciple had to address to his master before leaving his side.

But this time the master, Jesus, does not grant the *n'thinath r'shūth*, the conferring of authorization. The answer He gives is not a cold, curt negative, but is nevertheless a refusal. The reason for the refusal is couched in an expression that at first sight appears incomprehensible:

⁵ The incident is related also in Luke 9:39 L.

⁶ In *Matthaeum*, VII, 21 (PL, IX, 958).

"Follow Me, and let the dead bury their dead." In Luke 9:60 a few words are appended: "Go thou and preach the kingdom of God."

St. Augustine utters a profound thought, and one that corresponds to psychological reality, when he says that Christ's answer expressed the desire that the disciple should rise from his sorrow for his father's demise to nobler sentiments. Even if this satisfactorily represents the scope and the intimate nature of the reply, it by no means explains the formula: "Let the dead bury their dead."

Felix Perles has tried to throw light on the answer of Jesus from the standpoint of its formulation, by reconstructing the Aramaic text.⁷ According to him, the translator has wrongly vocalized the word *lmkbr*, and has read *l'mikbar*, "to bury," for *lim'kabber*, "to him who buries." Thus Jesus would have said: "Leave the dead to him who buries the dead, to him whose business it is to bury them." We do not think that the exegesis proposed by Perles is acceptable. To our mind, the passage has not been misunderstood, and the Greek translation, as well as other translations, are not in error, provided we give the word "dead" the meaning which belongs to it and which accords perfectly with the spirit of the Gospel text: "Let the dead, that is, those who have not accepted the proclamation of the kingdom of God, bury their dead." Although in all languages the word "dead" signifies simply and solely a being deprived of life, and only in a figurative sense refers to a person deprived of eternal life while yet in possession of earthly life,⁸ the corresponding word in Hebrew, *meth*,

⁷ His suggestion is discussed in Sirach-Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, I, 489.

⁸ To illustrate the figurative sense of "dead" we may quote the Latin prov-

is in itself philologically susceptible of two meanings: (1) dead; (2) a person on the point of death, one who is yet alive but is sinking into death. Grammarians give for *meth* the meanings: dying, dead, about to die.¹⁰

When rabbinic commentators explain Ezechiel 18:32, "For I desire not the death of him that dieth," by saying, "The wicked while yet alive are called dead," they inadvertently bring out the fact that the word *meth*, besides meaning "dead," also signifies "one who is deprived of fellowship with the Lord." The double force of *meth* is clear in Deuteronomy 17:6: "By the mouth of two or three witnesses shall he die that is *meth*." Here the term cannot mean "dead," although it does mean one over whom the threat of death is impending. Christ, in the formula we are analyzing, appreciates the various shadings of *meth* and makes a new play on words, which can be grasped only by a person who is able to enter into the spirit of the Hebrew, but which cannot be adequately rendered in any other language.

What Jesus means by the expression "those about to die," agrees with the common interpretation, the only one possible. He means those who are advancing toward absolute death, without interruption of progress, without the vision of the kingdom of heaven, without the life that is to come. In His view that little circle in which the disciple's father is found is a cemetery: the dead are dead, and so also

erbe: *Vita sine litteris mors est*, "Life without books is death," and *Otium sine litteris mors est et hominis usi sepultura*, "Leisure without literature is death and the burial of a living man." The usage of assigning a metaphorical sense to the notion of "dead" is exemplified also in Romans 6:10 f. Speaking of Christ, the Apostle says: "In that He died to sin, He died once; but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God. So do you also reckon, that you are dead to sin but alive unto God."

* Cf. Geenius-Kautsch, *Hebräische Grammatik*, p. 189.

are the living who are on the point of dying. For this reason He does not wish His disciple, who is truly alive, since he is advancing toward the eternal life of the next world and is destined to recover life in the kingdom of heaven immediately after his death, to go back and associate with the various classes of the dead.¹¹

A number of passages from the New Testament can be cited in confirmation of our stand that the Gospel applied the word "dead" to those who do not follow the path marked out by Christ, even though they are physically alive; the converse is also true. In John 11:25 f. Jesus says: "I am the resurrection and the life: he that believeth in Me, although he be dead, shall live. And every one that liveth and believeth in Me shall not die forever." In the parable of the prodigal son the father exclaims: "This my son was dead and is come to life again" (Luke 15:24). In John 5:24 we are told: "He who heareth My word . . . is passed from death to life." And in Ephesians 2:1 we read: "And you, when you were dead in your offenses and sins," were restored to life by Christ.¹²

¹⁰ There is no ground for thinking that the prohibition about returning to bury the father is connected with our Lord's pronouncement in Luke 14:16.

¹¹ An explanatory note is needed to clarify the text of Matt. 16:28: "Amen I say to you, there are some of them that stand here that shall not taste death till they see the Son of man coming in His kingdom." Some commentators attach great importance to the words, "taste death," saying that Christ was the first to coin the phrase and to express such a notion. They interpret the passage as follows: "Whereas infidels fear death because they have to suffer it, believers can desire it because they will taste it." Cf. D. Argentieri, in *L'Evangelista*, XLIX (1937). We may be permitted to observe that the words of Jesus reflect the expression so often met with in rabbinic language, *ta'om ta'am mithah*, that is, to experience death. In reality the verb *ta'om* and the substantive *ta'am* are equivalents of "taste" when there is question of "experiencing." The "taste" perceived in the experience can be pleasant as well as disagreeable. The words, "shall not taste death," in Matt. 16:28 mean "they shall not undergo death, they shall not have experience of death." Hence there is no reason for assigning to "taste" the connotation of "find pleasure in."

Exodus 32:13, "Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, Thy servants," is thus explained in the Midrash Rabba: Moses asks the Lord the question, "Are not the dead alive?" God answers, "Yes." Moses continues: "Remember, then, the merits of the patriarchs as though they were living in this generation."

It is interesting to note that, according to a rabbinic law based on the Torah,¹² a *kohen*, one who is of priestly lineage, may not enter a cemetery, and may not incur uncleanness except on behalf of near relatives. In the Talmud a priest is asked: "What has a priest to do with a cemetery?" Evidently Jesus elevates this biblico-rabbinic disposition, as in so many other cases we have examined, to a plane more in keeping with His teaching. He regards His disciple as a priest, not of the Temple, but of faith in Himself, and He does not wish him to go back among people who cannot look for a future life, and for whom in consequence the world is already a cemetery.

As for the play on words, we discover here, too, a method which is employed by Jesus on other occasions and which is quite personal with Him. Whereas the rabbinic writers use words of double meaning separately, generally in the more common sense and only now and then in a secondary sense, Jesus often chooses to introduce a word in both of its acceptations together, in the same sentence. In such cases He reveals His deep knowledge of Hebrew and Aramaic. He knew how to combine in the term *kadosh*, which at the top of an imaginary triangle has the meaning of "clear-shining" and "sacred," and which then divides into

¹² Lev. 21:1 ff. A similar prohibition, affecting Nazarites, is found in Num. 6:6 f. Rossi, in reference to Lev. 6:6 f. (an erroneous citation for Num. 6:6 f.), compares the apostle of Christ to the Nazarite. Cf. Rossi, *Il Vangelo secondo Luca*, p. 125.

"sacred" (the more common sense) and "clear-shining" (the less usual sense), a splendid play on words, associating the ideas of "shining thing, gold necklace, and gift of the spirit," in a discourse where an allusion to a rabbinic precept could lead one to suppose that He was thinking of consecrated meats.¹³ When He is speaking of leaven as the ferment of evil, He makes the same term refer to the rabbinic precept of not leaving any leavened bread in the house when one goes to offer the paschal sacrifice.¹⁴ Finally, in the passage we have just been examining, He uses the term *meth*, in a single brief sentence, in the meaning of "dead" and "destined for death," that is, morally dead.

These brilliant, vivacious plays on words, which at the same time raise a whole series of rules, taken from legalistic and ritualistic life, to a moral level, could not but charm the masses and spread quickly among the nations.

¹³ Cf. chap. 7 of the present volume.

¹⁴ See chap. 4.

CHAPTER X

Lamb of God

JOHN the Baptist sees Jesus coming toward him and cries out: "Behold the Lamb of God, who taketh away the sin of the world." Then John gives testimony, saying, among other things: "He who sent me to baptize with water said to me: He upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, He it is that baptizeth with the Holy Ghost. And I saw, and I gave testimony that this is the Son of God."¹ Two epithets occur in this passage to characterize the personality of the Master: "Lamb of God" and "Son of God."

As is well known, the concept "Son of God," referring to the Messiah, is found in Psalm 2:7. In Isaias, chapter 53, the messianic figure of the Servant of God is represented as a "lamb" that "bears" (verse 12) or "takes away" (the verb *nāš* is capable of both meanings) the sins of many. In St. John's Gospel, therefore, the expression "lamb of God" is regarded by some as a "messianic name"² which serves to describe the Messiah as him who suffers in silence. The thoughts of others turn to the Lord who offers His Son in sacrifice, recalling Isaac who was offered but not sacrificed.

¹ John 1:29-34. On "Son of God," see also Tondelli, *Gesù Cristo*, pp. 465-80.
² Thus Cremer, quoted by Bälerbeck, *Kommentar*, II, 367, n. 2.

Bell, Burney, and more recently Jeremias³ believe that "lamb of God," *agnus Dei*, *ἀμνός τοῦ Θεοῦ*, stood for *talya' delaha* in the original Aramaic, and that, since the term *talya'* comprises the meanings of "lamb, boy (or son), and servant," the translator was not fortunate in his choice, and instead of writing "son" or "servant of God," erroneously rendered the words as "lamb of God," *ἀμνός τοῦ Θεοῦ*. Dodd observes that *ἀμνός* is never found in the Septuagint as the translation of the Hebrew *taleh*, which is the precise term corresponding to the Aramaic *talya'*. In the Old Testament *taleh* occurs three times, and is consistently translated *ἀρήν* in the Septuagint. Jeremias defends himself by noting—justifiably, in our opinion—that *ἀρήν* and *ἀμνός* may be interchanged in translating *kebhes* and its synonyms, and that, besides, the Septuagint has *ἀμνός* a hundred times and *ἀρήν* thirty times, seeing that the first term is the more common. Moreover, he remarks, John 1:29 was influenced by Isaias 53:7-12 (*ὡς ἀμνός*), where, as everyone knows, there is question of the "servant of God." The Septuagint usually renders *'ebhed Yahweh* by *παῖς*, son, and only three times by *δοῦλος*, servant. The latter Greek word cannot mean anything but "servant," whereas *παῖς* and the Aramaic *talya'* can mean both "boy (son)" and "servant."

For *'ebhed Yawheh* the Targum on Deutero-Isaias gives the Aramaic *'abhda*, which corresponds to the Hebrew *'ebhed*, servant, but not to *talya'*. Jeremias conjectures that *παῖς* tends to disappear from Judeo-Greek literature in the second century after Christ, its place being taken by

³ Joachim Jeremias, "Aarón τοῦ Θεοῦ-wirkt Θεοῦ", *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, XXXIV (1933), 115-23. See also the same author in Kittel, *Theologischer Handkommentar zum N.T.*, I, 312 ff.

δοῦλος. In this he sees an anti-Christian movement which aims at depriving the followers of the new doctrine of the possibility of proving that Christ is the Son of God. What favored the Judeo-Greek writers could not favor the Aramaic-speaking Church; the latter, in place of the terms 'abha' and δοῦλος, which meant only servant, preferred *talya'* as a single word that could mean two things: son of God and servant of God. This Church would not have thought of "lamb of God," a concept that was introduced only through an error on the part of the translator.

The science of Hebraism, today more than ever, thanks in large part to the recent appeals of Krauss and Marmorstein,⁴ is aware of the importance of anti-Christian sentiments in the Hebrew literature of the first centuries for the history of Christianity or, to be more exact, for a knowledge of the spiritual tension—a tension that has its tragic and fatal elements—between the Hebrews and the followers of the new teaching. More likely than not, therefore, the prevalence of δοῦλος in Judeo-Greek literature, from the second century on, is owing to considerations of an apologetic, or, as some may prefer, a polemic character.

However, we cannot accept the idea that the preference of the Aramaic-speaking Church for the term *talya'* is also to be explained by a desire to assert or defend its own interpretation. In our judgment, the choice of *talya'* in Christian communities is more ancient than any misgivings on the part of the opposition. Nor can we admit, in spite of our awareness that a translator may often, especially when a term is capable of bearing various meanings,

elect the less appropriate rendering, that the expression "lamb of God" found its way into Christian literature through a lack of understanding on the part of the translator. We share fully in the conviction that *talya'* is closely connected with the notion of *agnus Dei*, but we are also convinced that the translator has admirably discharged his task, and that the fusion of the two concepts, lamb and son (of God), with reference to Christ, is more ancient than any Aramaic text written for this purpose, and hence more ancient than any Greek version. We are convinced that this synthesis of the two ideas is, in a certain sense, older than Christianity itself, that is, that the association was made in the mind of Jesus.

The Christ who silently gave Himself to prayer and meditation in a remote corner of Palestine was sensitive to the echo of the penitential preaching of John the Baptist. Penitence and purification are two allied concepts. Indeed, they are more than merely allied, they are inseparable in religious psychology. Only one who feels the weight of the world's sins can appreciate the imperative need of purification. Penitence is purification in practice. The 'ebhed Yahweh is a figure that never disappeared below the horizon of Hebrew religious outlook. And the 'ebhed Yahweh comes as the full and complete solution of the problem of purification. In His solitary meditations, Christ clearly saw that He was the living incarnation, the perfect realization of the sublime vision, human and divine, of the "servant of God" who is pure as no other is, and who presents Himself to the mind of him who is at once prophet and poet, under the form of the silent lamb. In His own thought Christ surpasses the figure of the

⁴ A. Marmorstein, *Maamar 'al 'erkah ha-histori shel ha-aggadah*, in the volume, *Sefer ha-jobbel* in honor of Samuel Krauss, Jerusalem, 1937, pp. 55-65.

servant of God, inasmuch as He recognizes that He is the Son of God, the Second Person of the Trinity, and God Himself.

The evening of the farewell is the evening in which Christ, in a burst of love, offers all that is in His soul to His disciples, without being concerned whether He is understood by them or not. In the farewell discourse, He reveals to His disciples the great mystery of His life. He, who was regarded as *rabbi*, master, and also as *kyrios*, lord, reveals to them that He is the envoy of the Lord, the Son of the Lord, the Second Person of the Lord, and the very Lord Himself, God. To our mind, this revelation openly made at the Last Supper has all the appearances of a fact that is thoroughly historical. At the same time, Jesus identifies Himself with the paschal lamb, saying: "This is My flesh and this is My blood: eat and drink." He identifies Himself with the lamb, not only because the paschal sacrifice is also, in part, a symbol of purification, but especially because He had from the beginning the lively concept of being the '*ebhed Yahweh* offered as a lamb. The Son of God, therefore, is also the Lamb of God.⁶

Thus the phrase, "lamb of God," arises from the fusion of these two concepts, a fusion fully matured in Christ's soul. Although no language can express the association of the two ideas as perfectly as the Aramaic *talya*, the use of the single term "lamb" is not a mistake. Christ is the lamb sacrificed for the redemption of mankind. He is the '*ebhed Yahweh*, He is the Son of God.

⁶ In John 19:33 we are told that Christ's legs, unlike those of the other two condemned men, were not broken. This fact, as the commentators note, is a fulfillment of Exod. 12:46, according to which not a single bone of the paschal lamb was to be broken. Thus this incident, too, clearly shows that Christ represents the paschal lamb in the Gospel conception.

By the sacrifice of Himself, Jesus, the paschal lamb, procures deliverance from the slavery of sin (1 Pet. 1:18 L), hence the deliverance not of one nation but of the whole world (John 1:29). Jesus sends the apostles as lambs, ὡς ἄρνας (Luke 10:3; cf. Matt. 10:16) into the midst of wolves. In a similar way Hadrian speaks to R. Jehoshua (ca. A.D. 90) of Israel as of a sheep in the midst of seventy wolves (peoples), but Jehoshua praises the shepherd (God) who protects the sheep and slaughters the wolves. The Apocalypse speaks of Christ as *ἀρνίον*, Lamb, the Redeemer and King of the world.

The connection between these ideas is of the very essence of Christianity. Each of the two ideas, taken by itself, has its history in the ancient life of Israel. But here they are placed in such a relation as to form a perfect antithesis to Hebrew thought and to constitute the line of demarcation between the old and the new teaching.

According to Löhr,⁷ the ultimate goal of Hebrew religious thought is the sovereignty of God in the world. With the coming of the Messiah, regarded as a son of David in the metaphysical sense, hope in the victory of God's reign on earth, in the victory of truth and of good, becomes incarnate.

⁷ Max Löhr, *Alttestamentliche Religions-Geschichte*, p. 138.

CHAPTER XI

The Breaking of Bread from House to House

1. THE BREAKING OF BREAD

OF the two Greek terms employed to characterize the Last Supper, *eὐλογία* corresponds to the Hebrew *b'rakhah*, blessing, and *εὐχαριστία* corresponds to *hōdā'ah*. St. Paul, in I Corinthians 11:20, calls the Last Supper "the Lord's supper." This expression comprises the whole banquet, whereas *eucharistia* literally denotes the raising of the spirit toward God at the beginning of the meal. The designation, *fractio panis*, breaking of bread, is of greater importance, because it takes us to the heart of the ideal interests distinctive of the Last Supper.

In Luke 24:35 the disciples relate how they knew Jesus in the "breaking of bread." This does not mean, thinks Michaelis, that Jesus had a special way of breaking bread, but indicates the moment in which the disciples recognized their Master.¹ The idea suggested by Michaelis does not appear very plausible to us, since it supposes a striking coincidence; that the disciples knew Christ at the very instant He was breaking the bread. Quite different is the view of Lagrange: "If Jesus did not give them the Eucha-

rist, we may suppose that He had His own particular way of breaking the bread."² This manner of breaking the bread apprised the disciples of the Master's identity; up to this moment, according to St. Augustine, Satan had blurred their vision.

To understand Luke 24:35, we have to read attentively the preceding verses, which describe the meeting of the risen Jesus with the two disciples who were on their way to Emmaus. Arrived at their destination, they invited their traveling companion, whom they had not recognized as the Master, to go into the village with them and spend the night there. Jesus accepted the invitation, and, "whilst He was at table with them, He took bread and blessed and brake and gave to them." In this action He followed to the letter the Hebrew rite, according to which "he who breaks the bread" (in Talmudic language, *bosea' eth hap-path*, or *pores eth hap-path*)³ pronounces the blessing, and the fellow-diners answer, "Amen"; the blessing ought to be finished before the action of breaking the bread. At the moment the disciples took the bread and were conveying it to their mouths, "their eyes were opened and they knew Him." This expression calls to mind Genesis 3:5: "In what day soever you shall eat thereof, your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil."

The remark scarcely needs to be made that "to have one's eyes opened" is a figurative way of saying, in Hebrew as well as in modern languages, "to gain knowledge," "to understand." What we desire to stress is that the effect of "opening one's eyes," that is, of letting the eye roam over

¹ *Synopse des quatres évangiles*, p. 251, n.

² According to Elbogen, *Der jüdische Gottesdienst in seiner geschichtlichen Entwicklung*, p. 514, *paros* can mean only "to break bread," and in this is synonymous with *bz*; the verb has never meant "to give a blessing."

³ *Das Neue Testament*, p. 309.

more extensive horizons, is produced in Genesis 3:5 by eating. Also in I Kings 14:27, we learn that when Jonathan, Saul's son, after a day of exhausting battle, dipped the end of the staff he was carrying into a honeycomb and lifted his hand to his mouth, "his eyes were enlightened." In this passage we are not told which cognitive faculties were stimulated by the food; but in Genesis 3:5 there is question of a deep knowledge that is more than human. In our opinion, the effect produced in Adam and Eve by the fruit of the tree of Paradise had its counterpart in the disciples when they carried to their lips the bread offered by Jesus: their eyes were opened to a more extensive comprehension, and they recognized the Master.

At the same time, no doubt, the act of Communion was accomplished, as during the Last Supper, since the bread which the disciples received from Christ's hand and over which He Himself had pronounced the blessing, established a spiritual bond between them.⁴ This is the first Communion to take place after the Resurrection, and surely this act was effective in flooding the souls of the disciples with the brilliant light which at that moment illuminated their minds and their eyes.

2. FROM HOUSE TO HOUSE

The act of "breaking bread" was one of the chief rites performed by the earliest communities. In Acts 2:42 we read that the newly baptized "were persevering in the doc-

⁴ In support of this interpretation we may quote I Cor. 10:16 f: "The bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of the Lord? For we, being many, are one bread, one body, all that partake of one bread." On "bread" in the New Testament, see Johannes Behm in *Theologischer Handkommentar zum N. T.*, I, 475 f.

trine of the apostles and in the communication of the breaking of bread and in prayers." In Acts 20:7 we are informed that the disciples of St. Paul gathered together on the first day of the week "to break bread." In Acts 2:46 mention is made of breaking bread *kar' olkor*.

What is the meaning of *kar' olkor* in this passage? The problem presents difficulties. The various attempts to explain it have recently been reviewed by Leone Tondelli,⁵ a scholar as learned as he is illuminating. The Vulgate renders: *circa domos*; others think of *domi*, that is, "in private"; yet others prefer *domatim*, "from house to house." Jacquier translates: *à la maison*; the whole verse taken together means, he thinks, "that the faithful had their meals in common, but in a number of houses (*kará* with the accusative indicates extension, especially in a direction from top to bottom), and that they partook of these meals in joy and with simplicity of heart. Therefore these meals had some special feature, probably the fact that they were eaten in common." Tondelli clearly prefers *domatim* to all these conjectures. He says: "Given the family character of the rite as it was instituted by Jesus, and given the value attached to the partaking of a single loaf broken up and a single cup passed around by Jesus Himself, a renewal of the rite from house to house is the only meaning that can be entertained."

Meyer renders *kar' olkor* by *Häuser-weise*,⁶ and seems to mean that, since the community did not have a special house for the cult, its members gathered in small groups now in one dwelling, now in another. This explanation does not seem satisfactory to us.

⁵ *Jesus Cristo*, p. 463.

⁶ *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums*, III, 231.

The New Testament sources dealing with the institution of the Eucharist are the following: Matthew 26:26 ff., Mark 14:22 ff., Luke 22:15-20, and I Corinthians 11:23-26. From all these passages we learn that Jesus, taking bread and giving it to the disciples, pronounced the words: "This is My body," and handing them the chalice, said: "This is My blood." The bread and wine, which have been changed into His flesh and His blood, serve also to indicate the fellowship between Jesus and His disciples.

Bread and wine were the symbol of fellowship in every festive meal among the Hebrews. But during the paschal supper, a further element represented with particular clarity the idea of a bond among those who partook of the banquet: the lamb, in whose body were ideally marked out all the members of the family, or, at a later date, all the fellow-diners in general. Thus Christ, when speaking at the paschal supper of His approaching death, proclaims that He Himself will be the sacrifice to be offered to the Lord, far transcending the way that Abraham—according to later rabbinic interpretation—identified his son Isaac with the animal to be immolated, and in reply to the question, "Where is the victim for the holocaust?" said: "A victim for a holocaust (art thou), my son."¹

As we have seen, the rite of the paschal lamb was propitiatory in character; that is, its purpose was to secure an increase of new life in man and beast at the beginning of spring. But the door posts were marked with the lamb's blood to keep the evil influences of the demons at a distance. Evidently the first value attributed to the paschal lamb was that of purification; a propitiatory value came

¹ Gen. 22:7 f. See the commentary of R. David Qimhi, *ad loc.*

second, since well-being can be achieved only after the act of purification has been accomplished.

In Ezechiel's thought ² the Pesah was detached from its connection with agricultural life to become, like the Kippur, a feast of purification of the sanctuary. In the conception which, to our mind, Jesus has of the Pesah, one of the essential elements is indeed expiation and purification, but of those who take part in the rite rather than of the sanctuary. Therefore Christ, who takes up arms against the evil in the world and sets out to vanquish Satan, proclaims Himself as the sacrificial victim destined to effect a purification in the absolute sense, for all men and for all times. Consequently His sacrifice abolishes the rite of the paschal lamb. From now on He will be the Lamb of God.

Vividly present to His mind, undoubtedly, is also the image of the "servant of God," who is exhibited as a lamb destined to suffer silently, without any plaint, and to take away the sins of the world.³ The 'ebhed Yahweh is he who "hath delivered [poured forth] his soul unto death" (Isa. 53:12).⁴ As Volz notes,⁵ the whole stylistic form of this chapter recalls the slaughter of the sacrificed animal.⁶ The flesh and the blood of the animal, *bašar w'-dam*, will hereafter be replaced by the man who is even called *bašar w'-dam* in the language of the Talmud. The bread and the wine, which have actually been changed into Christ's flesh

² See Bertholet, *Hesekiel*, p. 161.

³ Isa. 53:7, 12.

⁴ "Soul" is often identified in the Bible with "blood." The verb 'arōh is used in Hebrew also in the sense of "to pour out a liquid."

⁵ *Isaia II*, p. 181. On the relations between Isaías, chap. 53, and the New Testament, cf. *ibid.*, pp. 194 f.

⁶ Cf. Ps. 140:8, where the pouring forth of the soul is spoken of in the sense of slaying.

and blood, will take the place of the paschal lamb, expression of the sacrifice of purification and realistic expression of the family that has been made a single body. "Jesus broke only one loaf, just as He passed only one cup to His table-companions, inviting them all to drink of it. . . . Beyond doubt, that union of souls in the material sharing of one loaf and one chalice was present in the very thought of Jesus. This was, more than ever before, a communion of the table and a communion of the family."¹³

What can we gather from all this with regard to the phrase, *fractio panis* (*kar' olkor*) in Acts 2:46? In our opinion we have to go back to Exodus 12:3: "Speak ye to the whole assembly of the children of Israel and say to them: On the tenth day of this month let every man take a lamb by their families and houses." The Septuagint has: *kar' olkoros* . . . *kar' oikiar*, corresponding to *šeḥ l'-beth 'abhoth*, *šeḥ lab-bayith*, a lamb per family, a lamb per house. We take the liberty of proposing the hypothesis that *fractio panis* (*kar' olkor*) means the breaking of bread "by a family."¹⁴ The *lehem* or *kikkar lab-bayith* would be a sort of analogon for *šeḥ lab-bayith*. The fellowship which Hebraism knew through the formula *šeḥ lab-bayith*, a lamb per house, i.e., a lamb divided among the diners to represent the bond between the family and its head, now finds its way into the practice of the young Christian community under the formula, *kikkar lab-bayith*, a loaf per family.

We believe that the initial practice in the unfolding of the Eucharistic ceremony may have resembled the ancient rite. The Holy Sacrifice was re-enacted and the family re-

¹³ Tondelli, *Gesù Cristo*, p. 462.

¹⁴ The resemblance between the expressions in Acts 2:46 and Exod. 12:3 strikingly recalls the fact ascertained by Vannutelli regarding the similarities between Greek translations of the Old Testament and the Synoptic Gospels.

ceived Communion in memory of Christ. Soon the ceremonial developed, and fellowship was established also among table-companions forming a family united by a spiritual bond, in the manner of the *h^ubhūrah* in rabbinic terminology. Wherever the followers of the new doctrine found themselves together, they performed the act of renewal of the alliance; the Eucharistic Sacrifice was celebrated in their midst.

Kar' olkor does not indicate a custom of breaking bread "in different houses, in each house." Such a notion, as Tondelli well observes, "does not seem to befit the Eucharist." The phrase means rather: a loaf per family, a loaf for a group of fellow-diners, as *šeḥ l'-beth 'abhoth* (or *šeḥ lab-bayith*) in Exodus means: a lamb per family, hence a lamb for a group of fellow-diners.

In our opinion, Acts 2:46 is to be translated: "And with one accord they were faithful in attending the Temple daily; and they broke the 'loaf per family,' *kikkar lab-bayith*, and took their meals together with gladness and simplicity of heart." The first Christians are praised because, coming together in family groups, they celebrated the rite of communion with bread. And this rite was the most effective act in creating the sense of solidarity among the members of the young community.

CHAPTER XII

From the Farewell Discourse of Jesus

1. THE WASHING OF THE FEET

LUKE 22:24-27, Mark 10:42-45, and Matthew 20:25-28, which contain the sublime doctrine of humility given by Jesus to His disciples, are sometimes made to parallel John 13:1-18. However, we need only consult the precious synopsis by Lagrange to perceive that John 13:1-18 is not a true and proper parallel with the passages listed from the three Synoptics, for it reports an entirely different episode, that is, the episode of the washing of the feet, which is completely isolated in the Gospel literature.¹ It is connected with the three Synoptics only if it is interpreted as a teaching on humility. But what authorization have we for maintaining that the washing of the feet truly represents, in the mind of Jesus, nothing but an object lesson in humility? Could not this gesture perhaps have also another meaning which, like some of the other actions of Christ, was not grasped and which accordingly was regarded by ancient and modern writers, and possibly by the disciples themselves, as an action performed merely for the purpose of teaching humility?

We shall do well to study the passage in John as a nar-

¹ Lagrange and Lavergne, *Synopse des quatre évangiles*, no. 237; see also nos. 129, 224.

rative standing by itself. When the supper was over, Jesus rose from the table, laid aside His cloak, and, taking a towel, girded Himself with it. After that, pouring some water into a basin, He began to wash the feet of the disciples and to dry them with the cloth He had fastened about Himself. Simon Peter objected; but when Jesus said to him, "If I wash thee not, thou shalt have no part with Me," Peter surrendered impetuously: "Lord, not only my feet, but also my head!" The reply of Jesus is interesting and arresting: "He that is washed, needeth not but to wash his feet, but is clean wholly. And you are clean,² but not all."

When Christ finished the washing and resumed His garment, He again took His place at table and said to the disciples: "Know you what I have done to you? You call Me Master and Lord; and you say well, for so I am. If then I, being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that as I have done to you, so you do also. Amen, amen I say to you: The servant is not greater than his lord; neither is the apostle greater than he that sent him. If you know these things, you shall be blessed if you do them." Then He continued: "I speak not of you all; I know whom I have chosen. But that the scripture may be fulfilled: He that eateth bread with me, shall lift up his heel against me."

Origen, unlike other writers ancient and modern, be-

² The Hebrew term used to express this idea would probably be *tahor*, which signifies purity in the physical sense, but also in the moral sense. The Talmud preserves the account of a dying master, to whom his pupils put various questions. To the last question, regarding a matter of Levitical purity, he replied with the word *tahor*, and in pronouncing it breathed his last. Hence the saying: He was pure and breathed forth his soul with "pure." The disciples of Jesus were of a similar purity.

lieves that Jesus began with the disciples who were lower in dignity, and washed the feet of Judas before those of Peter. According to him, while the other disciples readily obeyed Christ's command, assuming that some reason underlay this humble action, Peter wished to express his mind and to prevent Jesus from performing the act, oblivious of the grace that would come to him from it. Jesus does not give Peter an explanation, but puts an end to his protestations by letting him know what his disobedience would cost him. With reference to the words of Jesus, "He that is washed, needeth not but to wash his feet, but is clean wholly," Origen observes that the washing of the feet is illustrative of Christ's grace, which can exceed necessity, in the spirit of the Apocalypse 22:11: "He that is clean, let him be cleansed more and more." Another ancient writer comments on the words of Jesus as follows: "Perhaps He is also alluding to the baptism received from John or from Christ Himself by those who were to baptize in His name." Verse 14, "If then I, being your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet," is explained by Origen in the light of Romans 8:15: "Christ does not wish His servants to have a slavish spirit; He wishes them to feel that they are sons and to call God by the name of Father." A homiletic coloring characterizes Origen's exegesis when he interprets the words of the Gospel, "I have given you an example that, as I have done to you, so you do also," as follows: "Good teaching is also a cleansing; by engaging in it, the disciples themselves become masters, by the power of the Master."³

With regard to verse 10, in which Jesus says, "He that is

³ Cf. St. Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor Evangelia* (Turin: Marietti, 1939), II, 553.

washed, needeth not but to wash his feet, but is clean wholly," Joüon, referring to John 11:55 ("And the pasch of the Jews was at hand, and many from the country went up to Jerusalem before the pasch to purify themselves"), says: "Perhaps the disciples had taken a bath on the occasion of the feast."⁴ But to reconcile the first part of Christ's statement with the second, he overlooks the words, "needeth not but to wash his feet." Tischendorf, Lagrange, and Huby do the same. But such an omission is not necessary, as we shall see.

Lagrange regards the act of washing the feet as a striking lesson in humility. He says: "It is because Jesus is conscious of His sovereign power that He desires to exercise it as a service; it is because He comes from God and returns to God that He wishes once more, with unparalleled humility, to take the part of a servant." Huby, calling attention to the custom in vogue at that time, of washing the feet of guests before and during a meal, is also of the opinion that there is question of a lesson in humility and fraternal service.⁵ He says that this is in harmony with verses 12-15 of the same chapter.

Verses 12 ff., which we have quoted above, are those in which the Master points out that He has given an example to the disciples so that they may do what He has done, and may wash one another's feet. However, given the insistence with which Jesus in the Gospel text recommends the repetition in times to come of the act performed by Him, we are surprised that no trace of the carrying out of such an order has been preserved.

Apparently Père Huby is also aware of this grave dif-

⁴ *L'Évangile de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ*, p. 345.

⁵ Huby, *Le discours de Jésus après la cène*, p. 22.

siculty, and he seeks indirectly to minimize it by saying that the disciples are directed, "if not to reproduce this action literally, at least to derive inspiration from it, that is, to practice unreserved devotedness and complete self-forgetfulness in their dealings with one another." But why should they not reproduce the action literally, seeing that the Master has laid on them so explicit a command to this effect? How do we know that the example given by Him was to be nothing but a source of inspiration for the exercise of mutual devotedness? "The Church," continues Huby, "although preserving in the liturgy the custom whereby the celebrant washes the feet of the poor on Holy Thursday, has never imposed this practice as obligatory on the faithful." But why not? Could the Church declare non-obligatory what Jesus, according to the Gospel text, ordered to be done in such emphatic words? The fact that the explicit precept of washing the feet has been placed in the background, quite otherwise than is the case with the precept concerning the bread and wine of communion, which is at the basis of the practice, discloses, in our opinion, the conviction of the ancient Church that the explanation of the action as an example of humility had an etiological character, and did not reflect the whole of Christ's genuine thought.

Furthermore, the very question with which Jesus begins His discourse after resuming His place at table, "Know you what I have done?" sounds strange in the mouth of the Master. We know that ordinarily He refrains from exacting an understanding of His acts and words rather than explain their meaning with unmistakable clarity, and moreover that during this last evening He chooses to unfold His thought by means of symbols,

whether they are immediately perceptible to the minds of the disciples or not. If there were question of so simple a thing as a lesson in humility, would He have judged it necessary to give a detailed explanation of it, thus proceeding in a way so different from all the conversations of that evening?

In conclusion, it seems to us that verses 12-17 interrupt the thought which is stated in verse 10 and which goes marvelously well with verse 18, that they are an etiological interpretation subsequent to the event, whose bearing was not then fully understood, and that therefore they cannot serve to confirm the idea that the washing of the feet was merely an example of humility.

Origen, followed by St. Jerome and many others, believes that the washing of the feet must be, besides an example of humility, a symbol of purification: purification of the apostles as a preparation for their ministry as preachers of the Gospel. The assertion of Jesus, "He that is washed, needeth not but to wash his feet," favors this thesis. This is why St. Augustine and St. Bernard explain the statement of Jesus as an expression of cleansing from minor faults unavoidable by human weakness and from venial sins, especially in view of the reception of the Eucharist. Certain modern expositors think the same. Among medieval writers, some regard this washing of the feet as a symbol of the penitence that remits the sins, grave or light, committed after baptism. According to St. Ambrose, the rite of washing the feet was practiced in the Church of Milan with regard to the newly baptized, and seems to have had as its purpose the slaying of concupiscence considered as a consequence of original sin.*

* Cf. *ibid.*, p. 16.

It was this very diversity of opinions that induced Huby to give up the idea of discerning in the washing of the feet a symbol of purification, so that he saw in it no more than an example of humility and charity carried to their extremity. As Lagrange says, Christ freely adopts that attitude which Emperor Caligula forced on certain senators as an atrocious insult.

The problem of the washing of the feet has also been studied by Hans von Campenhausen.⁷ He reviews the various hypotheses that have been put forward, among which, besides those already mentioned, is the one that attributes to the action performed by Christ a mysterious sacramental value, and another that considers it as an expression of servile love. At length, after justifiably opposing the opinion of those who see in the ceremony of the water a symbol of the Last Supper, Campenhausen expresses his own view, according to which the act would correspond to baptism: a baptism reduced from a complete bath to a simple bathing of the feet, since that would be enough for the "pure."

In the episode of the washing of the feet, some believe they hear the echo of a quarrel between those who wished to follow the practice inaugurated by John the Baptist, that is, purification by means of complete immersion in the waters of a river, and those who, conscious of the difficulties of spreading such a rite in regions short of water, had come to the conclusion that a few cubic centimeters, along with the imposition of the hands of the baptizing minister over the head of the baptized, would suffice for validity. Peter would be the representative of the opposition to the evolution of the baptismal rite. Christ, on the other hand, is

⁷ "Zur Auslegung von Joh. XIII, 6-10," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, XXXIII (1934), 259-71.

imagined to have taught that for communion with Himself immersion was not necessary, and to have said to the disciples: "You are already washed in virtue of the word I have addressed to you. Hence you have no need of further ablutions for your cleansing; all you have to do, if you wish to abide with Me in the kingdom of heaven, is to receive baptism." In the act of baptism, the quantity of water and the ablution as such are not the essential elements. As yet the Holy Spirit had not descended on the apostles. Therefore they understand only a part of Christ's procedure; actually, the washing of the feet is not a figure of baptism, but is the baptism itself.

As we see, there is considerable fluctuation among the various theories. Sometimes the act is given an interpretation that is at once ethical and psychological: the word purifies, humility is the product of example. Sometimes the washing of the feet is regarded as accessory to a baptism that has already been administered; at other times it is regarded as the baptismal act administered to the disciples for the first and only time.

This last supposition is contradicted, in our opinion, by a passage in the *Didache*, IX, 5, in which the celebrated saying of Jesus about not casting sacred things before dogs is interpreted as meaning that no one who has not received baptism ought to be admitted to participation in Communion conceived as a banquet of initiates.⁸ Could Christ have celebrated the Supper of Communion with apostles not yet baptized? Clearly, the washing that took place after the repast was finished cannot have had a baptismal significance.

Willam argues from the consideration that at the time

⁸ Cf. Loisy, *La naissance du Christianisme*, p. 291.

of Jesus a pupil was obliged to render various services on behalf of his master, even those services which slaves performed for their owners.⁹ However, the master might not require his disciples to perform tasks ordinarily reserved to slaves exclusively, such as unfastening his sandals and washing his feet.¹⁰ Willam also detects a disputatious note in the exchange between Jesus and Peter. But he does not think that the diversity of views was based on the idea of baptism conceived as a sort of momentary burying of the whole body and of subsequent resurrection in a spirit of purity; rather, it turned on the question whether it was admissible for the Master to perform one of those services which only a slave not of Hebrew descent could perform for his owner. Jesus, in alluding to the bath already taken by the disciples, was not thinking of a ritual immersion, but of purity of soul.

Tondelli says of the washing of the feet: "It is a symbolic action which some have endeavored to explain as a reducing to act of the idea already expressed by Jesus in the Synoptic Gospels, that he who is the higher ought to become the servant of the rest, as He Himself, the Master, was the first to do. But Peter's interruption is so impulsive and is so strikingly typical that we cannot fail to accept it as historical."¹¹ We agree with Tondelli in accepting the account as historical; but that does not yet fully explain the significance of the act.

According to Michaelis, the important thing in the epi-

⁹ *The Life of Jesus Christ*, p. 121.

¹⁰ As far back as Babylonian nuptial documents of the Hammurabi period, the task of washing a master's feet indicated the condition of slavery. Cf. S. J. Feigin, in the volume dedicated to Yellin, *Minhah le-dawid* (Jerusalem, 1935), pp. 48 ff.

¹¹ *Jesus Cristo*, p. 522.

sode is not the cleansing of the apostles, but the proof of love given by Jesus. Moreover, he excludes the possibility of a reference to baptism. The scene of the washing of the feet is well situated in the framework of a supper taken in common, and the ablution itself indicates no more than a forceful example. The hypothesis is not excluded, Michaelis holds, that the author of the Fourth Gospel, who regarded the last supper of Jesus as a paschal supper, may have narrated at this place the incident of the washing of the feet, which Christ may have performed on some other occasion.¹²

As far as Goguel is concerned,¹³ the action of Jesus has a mysterious sense: the washing of the feet is a purification complementary to baptism, representing and taking the place of the Eucharist.¹⁴ This view is not convincing. We could ask: if the washing can take the place of the Eucharist, why was the Eucharist instituted? Moreover, why was the Eucharist, rather than the washing of the feet, celebrated from the earliest times?

According to Loisy, the narrative of the washing of the feet becomes incomprehensible unless account is taken of the profound meaning hidden in every one of its details. The grave warning which Jesus gave to Peter when the latter refused the washing, "refers directly to the Christian mysteries, baptism and the Eucharist, both of which are declared necessary and are reduced to the single symbol of life-giving water, to the single idea of salvation procured by Jesus dead and yet alive. The question concerns, not the correcting of Peter's personal sentiments, but the com-

¹² *Das Neue Testament*, p. 373.

¹³ *La vie de Jésus*, p. 446.

¹⁴ The water and blood flowing from the wound of Jesus symbolize baptism and the Eucharist.

bating of the thesis of Hebrew messianism implicit in his words: Peter is unwilling that Jesus should lower Himself to the service of the life-giving death, and Jesus replies that this service guarantees the permanent efficacy of the sanctifying rites uniting the Christian to the source of eternal life. The necessity of baptism and of the Eucharist had already been proclaimed (John 3:5; 6:54). Far from being indifferent to sacred and efficacious symbols, we may say that Christ, according to John's conception, is greatly interested in them, since He Himself, by definition, is a sort of living and active sacrament, and at the same time a powerful mystagogue and a God, object of worship."¹⁸

Let us briefly discuss, first of all this welter of diverse and conflicting opinions.

No reason exists for doubting that the first to whom Christ turned was Peter.

We have no reason for regarding the washing of the feet as a rite designed to take the place of baptism. If Christ was baptized by John in the Jordan, most probably He requested and obtained the conferring of the rite on the apostles, and did not wait for the Last Supper to administer it Himself in abbreviated form, thus encountering Peter's opposition. Nor can we suppose that Peter rose up in rebellion to defend the fuller form of the rite, that is, complete immersion in water.

The act performed by Jesus cannot have been the usual washing of the feet arranged by the owner of the house for the convenience of his guests. In that case, Christ would not have failed to order it before the beginning of the supper rather than during the meal.

If there had been question of nothing but a display of

¹⁸ Loisy, *Les origines du Nouveau Testament*, p. 235.

humility on the part of the Master, He would not have told the disciples that omission of the washing would sever the bond of union between Him and them; such an immediate and decisive effect would have been truly disproportionate to the cause. Moreover, the narrative itself, as actually contained in the Gospel, does not warrant us in concluding that the washing of the feet was a mere manifestation of humility, but rather invites us to ascribe to it a much greater significance. Like everything else that happened that evening around the paschal table, this episode is veiled in the half-obscure series of symbolic actions: every gesture of Christ is an allegory, every word an allusion. And as symbol is succeeded by symbol, so incomprehension is followed by incomprehension.

As for Loisy's theory, if, as he observes, the necessity of baptism and the Eucharist had been proclaimed on a previous occasion, we cannot see how any need would be felt of clinching this idea after or during the Eucharistic repast. If we cannot assent to the hypothesis of those who sense a note of polemical tension in the attitude of Jesus toward Peter's refusal, neither can we admit that on the occasion of the washing of the feet Christ was determined to combat, in the person of Peter, the thesis of Jewish messianism. To our mind, the washing of the feet is a supremely charismatic act, and does not reveal the slightest indication of any desire to rise up against the ideas of other people. The events of this last hour of the Master's sojourn among His disciples breathe nothing but love. Not so much as a shadow of any notion of conflict falls on this picture, so splendidly illuminated by noble affection, deeply felt and warmhearted charity, and a pouring out of special grace. We believe that exegesis should endeavor to pro-

pose a hypothesis that has some semblance of truth, if it wishes to explain the nature of the rite of the washing of the feet in a way that does not obscure, with unfounded theories about dissension and discord, the beautiful light flowing from it.

To perceive the significance and value of the washing of the feet we must, in our opinion, investigate certain facts of Old Testament history.

Let us examine the sixth chapter of Isaias, which describes what we believe is an initiation ceremony into the prophetic apostolate. Isaias has a vision of the Lord: the train of His garment fills the whole *hekal*,¹⁰ that is, the Temple in all its vastness. Seraphim surround the divine throne and chant in chorus the Trisagion: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; all the earth is full of His glory." The celestial temple is filled with smoke. Fear seizes the prophet, mindful that he is a man of unclean lips and that he dwells in the midst of a people of unclean lips. But toward him flies one of the seraphim who holds in his hand a live coal taken from the altar with the tongs. With this he touches the prophet's mouth and says: "Behold, this hath touched thy lips, and thy iniquities shall be taken away, and thy sin shall be cleansed." Isaias hears the Lord's voice saying: "Whom shall I send ('eshlah)? And who shall go for us (*lanu*)?" And Isaias exclaims: "Lo, here am I, send me!"

The vision of Isaias is undoubtedly inspired, on its topographical side, by the sanctuary of Jerusalem. In the *hekal* of Jerusalem, the innermost chamber is the *kodesh hakodashim*, the holy of holies; in the heavenly *hekal* the holy of holies is the Lord's throne. The image of the smoke

¹⁰ In Sumerian, *gallu*, the great house.

clearly derives from the offering of incense. The verb '*eshlah*' (from *shalah*, to send), which is heard in the question asked by the Lord, is the technical term for the apostolate. In later Hebrew we shall meet *shaliah*, the one sent, the envoy, the apostle. And to whom does the plural *lanu*, in the second part of the question, refer? The word of the Lord is apparently addressed to the heavenly court surrounding His throne,¹¹ just as in Genesis 1:26, where He says: "Let Us make man." This plural, used in connection with the creation of man, is likened by Jirku to the attitude Marduk assumes toward the other gods in *Enuma elish*, the Babylonian creation epic: that is, the supreme god, before doing anything, makes known his will to the other gods.¹²

¹¹ Procksch also thinks that the Lord's words are addressed to the heavenly beings; cf. *Isaias I*, p. 57.

¹² Jirku, *Das Alte Testament im Rahmen der altorientalischen Kulturen*, p. 70. The words, "Let Us make man" of Gen. 1:26 are connected with the question of the creation of the angels, spiritual substances dwelling in heaven. On this subject see P. A. Vacari's commentary on Gen. 1:1 in *Terminus Domini*, XXIV (1944), 167 f. A sufficient treatment is given in C. Boyer, *De Deo creante et elestante* (3rd ed.; Rome: Apud aedes Universitatis Gregorianae, 1940), pp. 463 f. Boyer points out that the angels were certainly not created from eternity. Of the Fathers of the Church, some held that the angels were created before visible things; others think that they were created at the time of the creation of heaven and earth. In that case, to whom were the words, "Let Us make man" addressed? S. D. Luzzatto has recourse to the plural of majesty. Maimonides, in the first chapter of his *Guide to the Perplexed*, explains "to our image" in a spiritual sense. St. Ambrose writes: "Let Us make man to our image and likeness." Who says this? Is it not God, who made you? What is God? Flesh or spirit? Certainly not flesh, but spirit, of which flesh cannot be the image, since a spirit is incorporeal and invisible, whereas flesh can be grasped and seen. To whom does God speak? Not to Himself, surely, since He does not say, 'Let Me make,' but 'Let Us make.' Not to the angels, who are ministers: servants cannot have fellowship in activity with their master, nor an effect with its cause. God speaks to His Son, even though the Jews may reject this and the Arians may rebel. But let the Jews hold their peace and the Arians remain silent along with their ancestors; while excluding One from partnership in the divine activity, they admit several; and the prerogative which they deny to the Son, they hand over to servants." *Hexaemeron*, VI, 7 (PL, XIV, 257).

As Procksch rightly observes, the interrogative form used by Isaias rather than the imperative, indicates that the one who would undertake the mission had to offer himself voluntarily, in obedience to his awareness of a moral necessity, or a sort of categorical imperative. The Lord's question reveals a certain sadness, or, so to speak, an anxiety whether anyone will be found. But the self-offering of Isaias comes back quick as an echo. The prophet who, but a few moments before, had feared he would die because he found himself so close to the heavenly throne, now, with swift decision, displays an attitude of heroism, a quality, as Procksch remarks, that has something regal about it.

What has produced such a deep, radical change? Clearly, the cause is that symbolic action performed by the seraph, which conferred on the prophet the right to form part of the heavenly court. The touch of the live coal had been something more than a simple act of purification. After cleansing the prophet of every stain of guilt and sin, it introduced him into that company of beings who, in the Book of Job and in Genesis 6:2 are called *b'né 'lohim*, sons, that is, angels, messengers, envoys of God, and whom rabbinic literature will designate as "the family of the All-high," *jamalya' shel ma'lah*. Isaias regards himself as such. And the newest of the Lord's messengers, who has that moment undergone the rite of initiation, and who has been part of the heavenly family for only a few minutes, takes upon himself a great and burdensome apostolate. And the Lord entrusts to him the sublime and difficult task.

Among the events in the life of Abraham, one of the most interesting is the reception he gives to the three

guests who appear close by his abode. In Genesis 18:2 they are identified as three "men" who stand around him, and to whom he says: "I will fetch a little water, and wash ye your feet, and rest ye under the tree" (v. 4). In verse 16 there is question of "men" who depart in the direction of Sodom. As "men" they are designated also in verse 22.

In Genesis 19:1 mention is made of two "angels," *malakhim*, of the Lord, who arrived at Sodom in the evening. In verse 5 the Sodomites inquire about the "men" who have come to Lot. When Lot answers them, he too speaks of "men." The strangers still figure as "men" in verses 10 and 12. The two envoys accomplish the work of destruction, and in verse 15 we read that the "angels" urge Lot to hasten his departure.

The Palestinian Targum says, with reference to Genesis 18:2: "Three angels were sent to our father Abraham, and they were sent (*ishtalhin*) for three tasks, since each heavenly messenger is sent for only one thing. The first angel was sent to inform our father Abraham that Sara would give birth to Isaac; the second angel was sent to save Lot from destruction; the third angel was sent to accomplish the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, Adma and Sebhoim. And therefore the prophetic word of the Lord was delivered to Abraham, the just; the word of the Lord was delivered to him in a vision." Pseudo-Jonathan says about the same verse: "The patriarch lifted up his eyes and saw: and behold, there stood before him three angels in human form, who were sent for three different tasks." Then, with some variation in style, the same narrative exegesis as that given above follows. Verse 4, which mentions the washing of the feet, is completely omitted, both in the Palestinian Targum and in Pseudo-Jonathan.

The episode in Genesis preserves the record of men raised to the rank of angels, or, if we prefer, of angels in human form, who carry out on earth an apostolate committed to them by God, and to whom the patriarch offers the conveniences for washing their feet; though this is but a simple act of courtesy, common in the Orient.

The complete omission of this detail in the Palestinian Targum and in Pseudo-Jonathan stimulates thought and impels us to hazard a deduction, which may be a little far-fetched but which we nevertheless desire to express. The great importance ascribed in the Gospel to the washing of the feet may have induced the compilers of the two Aramaic translations of the Bible destined for the masses to pass by an episode that might have supplied the followers of the new doctrine with a basis for the vindication of a principle of theirs. And what may this principle have been? The fact that Jesus, like Abraham, did an act of courtesy to His table-companions? But in that case, He would not have told Peter that refusal of the ablution would put an end to association with Him. What then are we to say?

We believe that a connection can be established between the guests of Abraham and those of Jesus: the former, who wash their feet, are angels-men sent by God; the latter are men who, precisely in virtue of the washing of the feet, become angels, envoys, apostles of the Christ-God. Jesus has chosen the service rendered by Abraham to supernatural beings in human form, to raise His disciples to the rank of superior, supernatural beings. This, in our opinion, is the reason why the two Targumim have thought it well to remove the connecting links between the two episodes. And this is also the reason why we believe we may regard the narrative in Genesis as the psychological substratum of the

washing of the feet performed by Jesus during the Last Supper.

The washing of the feet influences the disciples by evoking those effects which, in the vision of Isaias, the touch of the live coal produced in the prophet. As the latter gesture is not a simple act of purification but an initiation rite into the prophetic apostolate, through which Isaias was admitted into the "family of the Most-high," so the former is not an ordinary baptism but an act possessing the power to cancel all stain of guilt and to raise the disciples to the status of angels on earth. The Gospel elsewhere informs us expressly that the apostles will be assigned places around the Lord and around Christ seated at the Lord's right hand, that they will eat and drink at Christ's table in His kingdom,¹⁹ that they will be the foundation on which the Church is built,²⁰ and on which the new Jerusalem reposes.²¹ They are clearly destined to form part of the heavenly family, like the seraphim who, in the vision of the Old Testament prophecy, surround the Lord's throne. Their angelic status, that is, their apostolic condition, begins officially, we may say, the moment the washing of the feet is finished. This is the most complete purification that a terrestrial being is capable of here on earth. Up to now immersed in human weakness, the disciples are suddenly raised to the dignity of messengers, ambassadors of God.²²

¹⁹ Luke 22:30.

²⁰ Eph. 2:20.

²¹ Apoc. 21:14. Cf. Meyer, *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums*, I, 293.

²² Num. 25:7 ff. describes the well-known episode of Phinees, grandson of Aaron the high priest, who killed an Israelite man and a Midianite woman, thus performing a zealous deed in defense of the purity of the Temple, which had been desecrated by an act probably hystogamic in character, hence by an act of degrading paganism. Verse 12 reads: "Therefore say to him: Behold I

Christ washes the feet of all the disciples. Also those of Judas? Surely, also those of Judas. Will, then, the traitor also be given a seat about the throne of the Lord and of Jesus Christ? Certainly not. Why, then, is he admitted to the washing of the feet? For a reason quite different from that for which the act is performed in favor of the other eleven apostles.

Let us once more read the words of Jesus attentively: "He that is washed needeth not but to wash his feet, but is clean wholly. And you are clean, but not all. . . . I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen. But that the Scripture may be fulfilled: He that eateth bread with me, shall lift up his heel against me" (John 13:10, 18). "*I speak not of you all. . . .*" Hence the intrinsic value of the washing of the feet is not equal for all the twelve disciples. For some one of them—and this cannot be anyone but Judas—the service ought not even to be rendered. But the Scripture must be fulfilled. Judas has taken part in the Last Supper, he has received the heavenly Bread from the hands of his divine Master, and therefore he has yet to verify the second half of the Psalm's prediction: he is to lift up his heel against the one who has given him his bread. And the washing of the feet offers a splendid opportunity for such a gesture. With this, all is over. Judas is not raised to the rank of an angel; he will have no part in the future

[the Lord] give him the peace of My covenant." Pseudo-Jonathan comments on this text: "With an oath tell him in My name that I decree for him My covenant of peace, and I shall make him an angel (*ma'akh*) for eternity, and he will be for eternity the bearer of the message (*merkhaṣṣrah*): this term expresses a concept usually akin to that of evangelist) of redemption to the end of days." We learn from this passage that the idea of raising a man still living to the status of an angel commissioned to bear the glad tidings of redemption, is not alien to Hebrew thought.

that awaits the rest of the apostles; he will not sit with them near the divine throne to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. Another will be chosen in his stead as the twelfth apostle.²³ And the lot of Judas after death will witness the fulfilling of Psalms 68:26 and 108:8,

Since John, chapter 13, deals with an action that is wrapped up in mysterious obscurity, we find it hard to advance any hypothesis that would be more than a conjecture. Consequently we do not presume to hope that our idea will gain the assent of all, even though it succeeds in throwing a new and revealing light on the whole episode. Our exegesis explains why the disciples and their followers have not continued the practice of washing one another's feet, and why the Church has not enjoined this service. Our exegesis also confirms the suggestion of Origen and of so many other authoritative writers, that washing of the feet has a significance transcending the motive of humility, and is a symbol of purification preparing the apostles for their ministry. Loisy would find it a support for the idea underlying his contention,²⁴ that the washing of the feet is the event of the Last Supper which better than any other discloses to the disciples the economy of salvation and the glory to come, and which illustrates the law of love that will not cease to keep them united to the immortal Christ. Lastly our exegesis recognizes in the act performed by Jesus that "mysterious, sacramental" character ascribed to it by some authors. This is a charismatic gesture which had to be made that evening and in those circumstances, which the disciples did not understand,

²³ Acts 1:15-26.

²⁴ *Les origines du Nouveau Testament*, p. 233.

or, as Campenhausen says, only half understood, because the Master was as yet too far from them, too high above them, too much alone.

Since Psalm 40 (41):10 figures so importantly in the narration of the episode that took place between Christ and Judas,²⁵ we propose to examine the text in itself, as it is presented to us in the Bible. The Psalmist complains in this verse of a person who, after having enjoyed his friendship and his trust, does something described in the Hebrew text with the words: *higdil 'alay 'akebh*. As for the person in question, the Masoretic text calls him *'ish sh'lomi*, literally, "the man of my peace." The expression, "bread with me" (John 13:18), appears in the Hebrew text of Psalm 40 (41) in the form *lahmi*, which means literally "my bread." But the ancient Latin rendering, *mecum*, "with me," has justifiably given, instead of a literal translation of the phrase, a sort of commentary, which exactly represents, if not the word, at least its sense. The question here concerns, not the duty of gratitude owed to a benefactor whose bread one has eaten, but the lack of loyalty to a person with whom one has eaten bread. Taking a meal together is equivalent to the contracting of a friendship, to a pact of alliance that imposes the duties of fidelity.

What is the meaning of *higdil 'alay 'akebh*?

The Septuagint gives: "has made his heel powerful against me." The Vulgate has: "Qui edebat panes meos magnificavit super me supplantationem." Rashi: "lay in ambush." S. D. Luzzatto: "has treacherously overcome me." Luzzi translates the verse in a way that is arbitrary

²⁵ John 13:18; cf. 17:12; Acts 1:16. See the *Liber Psalmorum* . . . cura Prof. Pont. Instituti Biblici (New York: Benziger Bros., 1945), pp. 74 f.

as well as infelicitous, both from the point of view of the thought and from the point of view of philology: "Even my friend, in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has given me a kick." *La Sacra Bibbia del Cardinale Ferrari* has: "My very friend, in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has plotted against me with excessive treachery." With reference to this translation we may be permitted to note: the concept of bigness is expressed in the word *higdil*, the pronoun "me" in *'alay*, and all the rest, "has plotted against me with treachery," would have to be comprised in the word *'akebh*. Vaccari translates: "Even my dear friend . . . grew crafty against me."²⁶ Bertholet says: "Hebt wider mich die Ferse hoch."²⁷ Buber: ". . . macht die Grosse Ferse über mich."²⁸ We are unable to understand how the translation gains by the use of the capital "G" in "die Grosse Ferse." Herkenne, referring to the Masoretic text, which he translates, "He has made his heel large against me," says: "This does not mean that he has lifted up his heel; on the other hand, the heel cannot be made bigger than it is."²⁹ Accordingly he accepts the suggestion of those critics who wish to emend the text by transferring the word *'akebh* to another place, to be exact, after verse 11b. But are we justified in changing the text, and is it necessary, or even possible, to locate the word elsewhere? Finally, the *Liber Psalmorum* gives: "Contra me calcaneū movit."³⁰

²⁶ *I libri poetici*, p. 106.

²⁷ Kautzsch-Bertholet, *Die heilige Schrift des A. T.*

²⁸ *Buch der Prezungen*, p. 84.

²⁹ *Psalmen*, p. 161. True, we find in the Bible the expression: "He has made his mouth big against me," but the mouth can really be widened or compressed, whereas the heel cannot.

³⁰ Cf. note 25. On the verb *'-k-b* as a constitutive element in the name *Ya'akob*, see Georg Jäggl, "Der Name Jacob," *Litterae Orientales*, LIV (1953).

In our opinion, Psalm 40 (41):10 stands parallel with Psalm 54 (55):13-15, 21-23. A comparison gives us, for 'ish sh^{el}omi in Psalm 40 (41):10, *shalah yadaw bish'lomaw* in Psalm 54 (55):21; corresponding to the phrase, "in whom I trusted" in Psalm 40 (41):10, is "my guide and my familiar" in Psalm 54 (55):14; for "who ate my bread" in Psalm 40 (41):10, we have the words, "they have [he has] defiled his covenant" in Psalm 54 (55):21. Instead of the expression, *higdil 'alay 'akebh* in Psalm 40 (41):10, we have the corresponding *'alay higdil* in Psalm 54 (55):13. If we review some of the main biblical passages, especially those in the Psalms, in which the verb *higdil 'al* occurs, we get the general impression that this term expresses the idea of "vaunting oneself before someone," or almost of "deriding someone." This appears certain to us from an examination of the thoughts and situations set forth in these passages, and also from the parallelism of the verses. See, for example, Psalm 34 (35):26; 37 (38):11 f.; Sophonias 2:10; Job 19:5. In all these instances there is question of someone who regards the sufferings of another with a sense of lively pleasure or of pride.

Psalms 40 (41) and 54 (55) viewed together give us the following situation. A man is suffering, he is struck with afflictions; and not only do his enemies rejoice and whisper to one another about him the instant they are out of his sight, but even his bosom friend, in whom he had placed his confidence, rejoices over his misfortune and is proud of his own superiority over him. As long as the friend is in the sufferer's presence, he continues to speak

16; Zolli, *Israele. Studi storico-religiosi*, pp. 63 ff.; P. Jolion, "Sens variés des verbes dénominatifs d'un substantif 'talon' en hébreu, en araméen et en arabe," *Biblica*, XX (1939), 397-400.

soft and comforting words; but as soon as he turns his back, he rises against him.

The concept of derisive pride is contained in the expression *higdil 'alay*, which occurs in both psalms. The idea of the vile action, performed sneakily and treacherously, is included in the term *'akebh*, which we find only in Psalm 40 (41), where it does not have the meaning of heel in a material sense, but is to be regarded as an adverbial form conveying the notion of something done in secret, "behind the heels," or, as we should say today, behind one's back. Just as the phrase *higdil 'alay* is used in a metaphorical sense and indicates a spiritual attitude, so *'akebh* here signifies, not a part of the foot, but a way of acting. In conclusion, Psalm 40 (41):10 is, in our opinion, to be rendered: "Even the man allied to me, in whom I placed my trust, the man who ate bread with me, has committed great treachery against me."

The Gospel does not allude to the verse of this psalm in this sense, which is arrived at by a painstaking analysis of the text, but refers simply to the material signification of the term *'khh*, that is, heel. This is conveyed in the Vulgate (justifiably followed by the *Sacra Bibbia del Cardinale Ferrari*) which, as we have seen, translates the verse: "qui edebat panes meos magnificavit super me supplationem," and in the Gospel: "levabit contra me calcaneum suum." At the same time, however, this psalm may represent a prophecy referring to the treachery of Judas, since, from the philological point of view, the root *'khh* means also deceit, perfidy. In the account of the relations between Jesus and Judas, the content of this verse of the psalm is therefore fulfilled in such a way that the two acceptations of *'khh* become reality: Judas commits the appalling be-

trayal and, at the same time, when seated for the washing of the feet, lifts up his heel against Jesus.

The exchange between Jesus and Judas is remotely suggested by the protevangelium, Genesis 3:15. The Septuagint gives *αὐτός*, where the Vulgate renders: "ipsa conteret caput tuum, et tu insidiaberis calcaneo eius"—that is, will plot a treacherous attack. The word 'akebh' is capable of both meanings. The spirit of evil, according to Catholic exegesis, plans a perfidious attack against the Redeemer. "He," Christ, and "she," the Blessed Virgin, will conquer him. The victory will go to Jesus, Son of Mary, who, "united to Him by an indissoluble bond, and exercising through Him a deathless enmity against the poisonous serpent, in fullest triumph over him has crushed his head with her immaculate foot."²¹

2. THE DIVINE NATURE OF CHRIST

The Master continues His discourse to His disciples: "At present I tell you, before it come to pass: that when it shall come to pass, you may believe that I am He" (John 13:19). What do these last four words mean? Is the translation exact, and does it accurately reflect Christ's thought? The Greek text reads: *ὅτι εἴω εἰμι*. The text is certain; the manuscripts exhibit no notable variants.²² However, Huby notes some divergencies in the translation of this phrase, which manifestly is of great importance.²³ Crampon and Lagrange render: "That you may believe who I am." Loisy translates: "That which I am." Huby, in his turn, observes

²¹ *Acta Pii IX*, I, 607; cf. C. Boyer, *De Deo creante et elevante* (3rd ed.; Rome, 1910), p. 435.

²² See Merk, *Novum Testamentum*, p. 363.

²³ *Les discours de Jésus après la cène*, p. 24, n. 1.

with telling insight that these translations have the inconvenience of assuming that the Greek *ὅτι* is a relative pronoun, whereas it is a conjunction corresponding to the Italian "che" (or the English "that"). Huby himself translates: "Afin que lorsqu'il arrivera, vous croyez que c'est bien moi."

While we render sincere homage to the perspicacity of Père Huby for assigning to *ὅτι* the value of a conjunction, we cannot refrain from noting that the clause as a whole, "So that when it shall happen, you may believe that it is really I," leaves the statement wrapped in a deep obscurity. Also the Latin text, "ut cum factum fuerit, credatis quia ego sum," does not guide us toward a sure understanding of this assertion which, situated in the framework of sadness encompassing the evening of the Last Supper, should, to correspond with our desires, be definitely set forth in clear light, like every phrase and every word uttered at that solemn moment.

In our opinion, after Jesus finished the symbolic action designed to raise the disciples to the dignity of divine messengers, He passes on to another matter of supreme gravity and capital importance: He offers them proof of His divinity. His words are a clear allusion to Isaias 41:17 ff. When the poor in their thirst beg for water, the Lord replies by opening sources of living water, turning the deserts into pools of water. By the Lord's will the wilderness is covered with green trees, so that all may know that the Lord's hand has done this, that the Holy One of Israel has created all this. In verses 21 ff., the prophet dwells on the idea, so dear to him, of God who announces future happenings to the people of Israel, who carries out His promises, and who brings the foretold events to pass, in

order that Israel may not ascribe any power to other beings outside of Him. The Lord of the universe foresees and foretells every action; therefore He is the true God. Isaias 41:23 ff. is tense with a polemical note: "Show the things that are to come hereafter, and we shall know that ye are gods. . . . I have raised up one from the north . . . who hath declared from the beginning, that we may know, and from time of old, that we may say: Thou art just. There is none that sheweth, nor that foretelleth, nor that heareth your words."

Isaias 43:9 reads: "All the nations are assembled together and the tribes are gathered: who among you can declare this?" Triumphant the prophet proclaims, in verse 12 of the same chapter: "I have declared and have saved. I have made it heard. . . . You are My witnesses, saith the Lord." In Isaias 44:6 ff. we are told: "Thus saith the Lord the King of Israel, and His redeemer the Lord of hosts: I am the first and I am the last, and besides Me there is no God. Who is like to Me? Let him call and declare. . . . From that time I have made thee to hear and have declared; you are My witnesses." In Isaias 45:21 the prophet asks: "Who hath declared this from the beginning, who hath foretold this from that time? Have not I, the Lord?" Isaias 46:9 f. is also of interest: "Remember the former age, for I am God . . . who show from the beginning the things that shall be at last, and from ancient times the things that as yet are not done." Finally, Isaias 48:3-5, 16 should be pondered.

All these passages reveal, as I have indicated elsewhere,²⁴ a constantly recurring thought: the Lord manifests Him-

self as the true God by disclosing historical events before they happen. Even Isaias 41:27, where the text is somewhat obscure, means, if the idea suggested by us²⁵ is admitted: "I have predicted these things first to Sion, and I have foretold them in advance to Jerusalem." This is a clear, sure, precise reply to the question in verse 26 of the same chapter: "Who hath declared from the beginning?"

As a result of all this, we can readily understand that in John 13:19 we ought to read: "I tell you these things now, before they happen, so that when they have happened, you may believe." Jesus, to our mode of thinking, intends to associate Himself with the ideas developed so copiously in Isaias, the messianic book par excellence, to which the Gospel literature refers so frequently. His underlying thought is this: "If I foretell the events before they happen, you cannot but believe. The prediction of future events before their occurrence was the proof of the divinity of Yahweh offered by Isaias to his contemporaries. Today I, the Son of man, offer you the same proof; today I foretell and I announce events to you before they come to pass. What, therefore, ought you to believe? You ought to believe δος ἐγώ εἰμι."

Here we are led to think of the words in the Hebrew text: *ta'minu she-'oni hu*, where the *hu* has an exclusive sense, as the lexicographers are accustomed to call it. Jesus means to say: "You ought to believe that I am and that there is no other besides Me. I am in God and with God, without any severing of continuity," or—as Huby has aptly phrased it—without any hierarchic difference. "I am God, God is absolutely one with Me, I am in the Father,

²⁴ Zolli, "Note esegetiche," *Giornale della Società Asiatica Italiana*, new ser. II (1933), 245 ff.

²⁵ The reading proposed by me in the *Giornale della Società Italiana* has been accepted in the critical edition of the Bible.

the Father is in Me. By foretelling what is to come, I have given you a proof of My divinity, such as has been given, in the history of all times, by One alone: God. I have performed this act of foretelling future events in all its fullness; therefore you cannot but believe that 'I am.' There is no other divinity outside of Me and My Father, and We two are but One."

It is precisely during the Last Supper that Jesus insists in a special way on faith in Himself: "You believe in God: believe also in Me" (John 14:1). Further, He foretells the lot that awaits the disciples: "They will put you out of the synagogue: yea, the hour cometh, that whosoever killeth you, will think that he doth a service to God. And these things will they do to you, because they have not known the Father nor Me. . . . But I told you not these things from the beginning, because I was with you" (John 16:2-5). Here the discourse is linked up with the gift of foreseeing the future, as an indication of Christ's divine character. The prediction of the treachery of one of the disciples is also a part of the foreknowledge.

Loisy says: "We should expect the Jews who were contemporaries of the author to use the treason of Judas, as they used the crucifixion, as an argument against the messianic office of Jesus. A Messiah who lets himself be deceived by one of his intimates? The Evangelist replies that Jesus was not deceived, for He unmasks the traitor even before the latter had any idea of betraying Him." We are not convinced of the correctness of this somewhat rationalistic interpretation of the episode reported by the Evangelist. In foretelling the betrayal, Jesus is not aiming at any apologetic end, although He makes known the deed that will be a new proof of His prevision regarded as a

divine power. And His reason for revealing the identity of the traitor to one of the disciples was, in our judgment, the demonstration of His gift of prevision in all its fullness.²⁶ The foreknowledge and prediction of the betrayal, the subsequent denunciation, the passion, the death, the resurrection, and the persecution of the apostles, all confirm the divine power of prevision possessed by Jesus.

Christ's thoughts do not break off at this point, and the continuity of His ideas is not interrupted. To convince ourselves of this, we have but to enter fully into the surroundings in which this episode takes place. Jesus goes on to say: "Amen, amen I say to you, he that receiveth whomsoever I send,²⁷ receiveth Me; and he that receiveth Me, receiveth Him that sent Me" (John 13:20). Lagrange is unable to find a connection between this statement and the foretelling of events before they occur. Tondelli thinks that the connection is not very clear.²⁸ Huby accepts as probable the explanation proposed by Pernot: "You are My envoys, and whoever will receive you will receive Me and My Father."²⁹

In our opinion, this verse is closely linked with what precedes. The reasoning of Jesus is based on a widely-known Talmudic proverb which was familiar to all and which on the present occasion was touched on in passing:

²⁶ According to Tondelli, *Jesus Cristo*, p. 525. Jesus at first wished to keep the person of the traitor concealed from the rest of the Twelve, because "He wanted no violent scene of the eleven faithful apostles against Judas to occur, a scene which, owing to the character of the apostles, would have become disgraceful and would undoubtedly have detracted from the solemnity and grandeur of those last moments. Thus He desired to keep the name secret, despite the anxious, uneasy questionings. He made the disclosure only to the beloved disciple, with the tacit understanding that silence was to be maintained."

²⁷ Willam, *Das Leben Jesu*, p. 421, translates in the same way: *den ich sende*. The Greek *τίθεσθε* probably means: "shall send."

²⁸ *Jesus Cristo*, p. 523.

²⁹ Huby, *Le discours de Jésus après la cène*, p. 24.

sh'liah 'adam k'moto, a man's envoy is like the man himself. In other words, the meaning of Jesus is this: "If it is true that he who receives an emissary receives also the one who sent him, it is no less true that he who receives Me, receives Him that sent Me. Since I am the envoy of My Father in heaven, you, in receiving Me, receive God. I am God, I am the envoy of God, I am wholly one with God. By receiving Me, you do not receive a God outside of God, but you receive the one God. I am your God." And God's messengers cannot be other than heavenly, supernatural beings. The washing of the feet therefore becomes, according to the idea proposed by us, the charismatic act which truly raises the disciples to the degree of apostles, and by that very fact to the degree of angelic beings.

In Mark 9:32-36 Jesus, to give point to His teaching about genuine greatness, takes a child, sets him in the midst of the disciples, and after embracing him says to them: "Whosoever shall receive one such child as this in My name, receiveth Me. And whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me." Billerbeck aptly recalls the rabbinic saying: "A king's ambassador is as the king himself."⁴⁰ The words, "in My name," are explained by Klostermann: "out of respect for My authority."⁴¹ Accordingly we have to emphasize the text thus: "Whosoever shall receive one such child as this in My name." The thought is clear: "Whoever receives a child such as this in My name, receives Me, because the child is at present regarded as My envoy, and an envoy represents the person by whom he is sent. I, in turn, am an envoy of God, and therefore whoever receives the child, thus receiving Me,

receives God." The underlying idea is that reception of Christ, even though it be only through an envoy, is the same as receiving God. Thus, from every point of view, we get the same result: Christ is God.

We believe that light is thrown on the incident of the child in Mark 9:35 by the words of Jesus in Matthew 10:40 ff.: "He that receiveth a prophet in the name [this is the Hebrew *leshem*: out of respect for his quality] of a prophet, shall receive the reward of a prophet [that is, the reward reserved for him who receives a prophet]; and he that receiveth a just man in the name [in respect of his quality] of a just man, shall receive the reward of a just man [that is, the reward reserved for him who receives a just man]. And whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple [and here we perceive a connection with the episode in Mark 9:32-36], amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward"—because whoever receives any of you who follow Me, who are My disciples, even if he is as yet but a child, receives Me; and whoever receives Me receives Him who has sent Me, God.

The connection I have suggested between the two texts appears to me to be the following—and up to the present, at least, I have not found it in any other author. Mark 9:32-34: "And they came to Capharnaum. And when they were in the house He asked them: What did you treat of in the way?" The question asked by Jesus is meant to prepare the way for the teaching He is about to give them. Jesus, the prophet, already knew what they had been talking about; but the disciples, realizing that the subject of their discussion had not been very edifying and was not in harmony with the desires of the divine Master, re-

⁴⁰ Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, I, 590.

⁴¹ *Das Markus-Evangelium*, p. 94.

mained silent, "But they held their peace, for in the way they had disputed among themselves, which of them should be the greatest. And sitting down, He called the twelve and saith to them: If any man desire to be first, he shall be the last of all and the minister of all" (that is, as a general attitude).

Matthew 10:41 comes next: "He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive the reward of a prophet; and he that receiveth a just man in the name of a just man, shall receive the reward of a just man."

Mark 9:35 says: "And taking a child, He set him in the midst of them. Whom when He had embraced, He saith to them (in Matthew 10:42): and whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only, in the name of a disciple [that is, because of the fact that he is close to Me], amen I say to you, he shall not lose his reward" [for having preferred, at a given moment, the child to a prophet or to a just man, because—and here Mark 9:36 follows—]: "Whosoever shall receive one such child as this in My name, receiveth Me. And [here Mark 9:36b coincides with Matthew 10:40] whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth not Me, but Him that sent Me."

The teaching thus given by Jesus may be reduced to the following form. "Although you have not told Me so directly, you have been debating the question about which of you should be the greatest. But I have seen your thought." Luke 9:46 ff. puts it this way: "And there entered a thought into them, which of them should be the greater. But Jesus, seeing the thoughts of their heart, took a child and set him by Him. And He said to them: Whosoever shall receive this child in My name, receiveth Me; and whosoever shall receive Me, receiveth Him that sent

Me. For He that is the lesser among you all, he is the greater."

The same fact has a somewhat different setting in Matthew 18:1-4. Here Jesus does not make use of the prophetic gift that enables Him to read the secrets of hearts; for "at that hour the disciples came to Jesus, saying: Who, thinkest Thou, is the greater in the kingdom of heaven? And Jesus, calling unto Him a little child, set him in the midst of them, and said: Amen I say to you, unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven." In other words: "You are discussing your hierarchic order in heaven; but if you keep going the way you are at present, you shall not even enter the kingdom of heaven." Verse 4 continues: "Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, he is the greater in the kingdom of heaven. And he that shall receive one such little child in My name, receiveth Me." Hence we must lay aside pretense, we must be trustful and full of candor, as children are in the presence of older people. Whosoever receives such a child, whether he be a child in age or in simplicity of soul, in the name of Christ, receives Christ Himself.

Prescinding from trifling variations in this or that detail of minor importance, we may say that Jesus, aware of the existence of conflicting views regarding hierarchy in the kingdom of heaven, is intent on putting the matter in its proper light. If anyone receives a prophet as a prophet, he will receive a proportionate reward; whoever receives a just man as such, receives a proportionate reward; whoever receives a little child in My name and gives him even so slight a thing as a cup of cold water, receives Me, that is, God. Nothing remains, therefore, but to become like

this child whom Jesus, to drive His point home, places in the midst of the apostles. This is the measuring norm of hierarchy. Simplicity of soul, confidence, faith in Christ. In comparison with such virtues, all others grow pale, because they are already contained in these or are surpassed by them. These virtues constitute mankind's great treasure that is safe from all erosion, because by means of them we receive Christ, and whoever receives Christ receives God.

Most instructive in this connection is the discussion reproduced in Mark 12:28-34, on the chief commandments (worship of the one God, the love of God, and the love of one's neighbor), where Jesus says to the scribe: "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God." The text should be read with particular attention to verse 35 of the same chapter. The discussion is about the descent of Jesus from David. Christ puts Himself on a much higher level and apparently means to say: "What does it matter whether the Christ is the son of David or not? David himself, inspired by the Holy Spirit, declared: The Lord said to my Lord, Sit on My right hand, until I make Thy enemies Thy footstool. If David himself, therefore, calls Him 'Lord,' how can He be David's son?" In asking this question, did Jesus wish to avoid all inquiry about His descent from David, as some commentators think,⁴² or was He aiming at something higher? In our opinion, whether He was desirous of forestalling a criticism of the genealogical question or not, Christ here affirms the divinity of the Messiah in an unmistakable manner. If the psalm, an inspired work, declares, "The Lord said to my Lord," and if the psalm, according to the rabbinic exegesis of that

time, is messianic in character, beyond all doubt the Lord recognizes the Messiah as on a par with Himself, and attributes to Him His proper personality. Christ is the Messiah, and the Messiah is God: hence Christ is God.

Also Luke 10:16, "He that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Me," is inspired by the thought that the emissary is equal to the one sending him.

Thus in John 13:20 Jesus, to reaffirm with unmistakable clarity the divine character of His own person, uses with telling effect the general concept of the dignity of an emissary, the principle sanctioned by usage and invested with enormous importance by custom.⁴³

In the light of our exposition, Christ, after showing by means of a symbolic action the exalted plane to which the disciples were raised, communicates to them the deepest mystery of His soul, and with extraordinary clarity, with a heroic impulse, divulges in verses 19 and 20, which are connected by an unbreakable logical tie, the doctrine of His divinity. The argumentation is simple and evident. He, the Christ, foretells events before they take place. Since he who foretells events before their occurrence is God, Christ is God. Furthermore, since an emissary is identified with the person who sends him, He, the Christ, sent by God, is identified with God. The fact of the prediction of the future, or of the divinity of Christ, is the clear proof "that I am He," *she-ni hu*. The Talmudic doctors would

⁴² Cf. Klosterman, *Der Metzä Evangelien*, p. 126.

⁴³ The contracting of marriage, divorce, the donation of gifts, etc., could be performed by proxies. Even the high priest who functioned on the day of expiation was regarded as the representative of the people. The elders who prepared him for his office on that day were known as "the envoys of the tribunal." On the notion of *shaliyah*, envoy, apostle, and the place it occupied in rabbinic thought, see S. Krauss, "Apostel," *Enc. Jud.*, III, 1 ff.

certainly have commented: *'ni w'lo aher*, I and none other.

The substantial unity of Christ with the Father is a concept, as Tondelli well observes, which "explains and demands the Eucharist, symbol of union."⁴⁴ The divine character of Christ had of necessity to be announced and explained prior to the institution of the Eucharist. Through the Eucharist the disciples are united to Christ and thereby also to God: to Christ and to God who are but a single unity. The words reported in St. John's Gospel stress this substantial unity between God and Christ with particular emphasis: "The words that I speak to you, I speak not of Myself; but the Father who abideth in Me, He doth the works" (John 14:10). "In that day you shall know that I am in My Father" (14:20). "And the word which you have heard is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me" (14:24). "My doctrine is not Mine, but His that sent Me" (7:16).

After the discourse about His divinity, Jesus pronounces the prayer called sacerdotal, in which we read: "Now they have known that all things which Thou hast given Me, are from Thee; because the words which Thou gavest Me, I have given to them; and they have received them and have known in very deed that I come out from Thee, and they have believed that Thou didst send Me" (John 17:7 f.). Also here, as is evident, Jesus is thinking of the unity between Himself and God, between Himself and the disciples.

⁴⁴ *Genù Cristo*, p. 533.

CHAPTER XIII

The Episode of the Two Swords

(Luke 22:35-38)

THE account of the Last Supper in the Gospel of St. Luke (22:14-28) is followed by a number of words of farewell. The dispute among the disciples regarding which of them ought to be reputed the greatest, provides the Master with an occasion for His teaching: "He that is the greater among you, let him become as the younger; and he that is the leader, as he that serveth. . . . I am in the midst of you as he that serveth. And you are they who have continued with Me in My temptations. And I dispose to you, as My Father hath disposed to Me, a kingdom; that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and may sit upon thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

If we turn our thoughts to rabbinic literature, those passages come to mind which declare that in the future the Lord will assign 310 worlds to each just man as his inheritance, and that the just in the next life will be seated with crowns on their heads and will rejoice in contemplating the splendor of the divine Majesty. The possession of vast estates and crowns¹ on the heads indicate spiritual sovereignty at the side of God.

¹ St. Peter beseeches the ancients to feed the flock of the Lord, not "as lording it over the clergy," but by being examples to the flock. "And when the prince

Jesus then predicts that Peter will deny Him three times before cockcrow. At length the Master's words grow gentler than ever and are steeped in melancholy: "And He said to them: When I sent you without purse and scrip and shoes, did you want anything? But they said: Nothing. Then said He unto them: But now he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise a scrip; and he that hath not, let him sell his coat and buy a sword. For I say to you that this that is written must yet be fulfilled in Me: And with the wicked was He reckoned [Isa. 53:12]. For the things concerning Me have an end. But they said: Lord, behold here are two swords. And He said to them: It is enough" (Luke 22:34-38).

The first part of this conversation is sufficiently clear and, unlike the episode of the two swords for which no parallel exists, is illustrated by passages in Luke himself as well as in the other Gospels. In the chapter on the mission of the Twelve, Luke 9:1-6, Jesus, after investing them with authority over devils and power to cure diseases, sends them to preach the kingdom of God and to heal the sick. "And He said to them: Take nothing for your journey, neither staff nor scrip nor bread nor money; neither have two coats." In Matthew, chapter 10, after bidding the disciples to heal the sick, to raise the dead, to cleanse lepers, and to cast out devils, Jesus continues: "Freely have you received, freely give." At first sight, these words seem to bar the way to understanding what follows: "Do not possess gold nor silver nor money in your purses, nor scrip

of pastors shall appear, you shall receive a never fading crown of glory" (1 Pet. 5:1-4; cf. II Tim. 4:8). James 1:12 refers to the blessedness of the man who has overcome temptations and who "shall receive the crown of life, which God hath promised to them that love Him." Cf. Apost. 2:10. See also Paolo Brezzi, *Cristianesimo e Impero Romano* (Rome: A.V.E., 1940), p. 78.

for your journey nor two coats nor shoes nor a staff; for the workman is worthy of his meat." The meaning is this: "Spiritual power has been conferred on you as a gift. Discharge your mission and offer as a gift to the people your power to cure diseases, raise the dead, and effect exorcisms. Do not be concerned about material things, for the good works you do and the apostolate you exercise, give you the right to that bit of food and clothing you need to live."

Mark 6:7 ff. presents several variants worthy of notice. The passage informs us that Jesus, calling the Twelve together, "began to send them two and two," and, after giving them power over unclean spirits, "commanded them that they should take nothing for the way, but a staff only: no scrip, no bread, no money in their purse; but to be shod with sandals, and that they should not put on two coats." Accordingly we are here told that the apostles were sent out by the Master, two by two, and that they had leave to carry a staff, whereas in the version of Luke and Matthew even the staff is to be laid aside. In general, however, this episode, which Jesus recalls during the last evening, is clear and intelligible, and the accounts reported by the different Gospels complement one another. Jesus bestows sublime powers on His disciples, commits to them the double office of healing and of the apostolate, charges them to announce the advent of the kingdom of heaven, and lastly admonishes them not to think of earthly goods, to renounce all possessions, to offer their help gratis, just as the power to carry out their mission was conferred on them gratis.

But none of these passages makes any mention of weapons. When, therefore, during His final meeting with the disciples, Jesus recalls the peaceful day on which He

had sent them through the land unprovided with everything, to contrast it with the grave moment now at hand. why does He refer to the two swords? This reference seems to veil some portentous foreboding, which harmonizes well with the tragic mood of the hour and which finds eloquent expression in a whole series of utterances alluding to approaching death.² Matthew 26:38 also gives us an indication of the atmosphere fraught with deep suffering which lay heavily that night: "Then He saith to them: My soul is sorrowful even unto death." And Matthew 26:45: "Then He cometh to His disciples and saith to them: Sleep ye now and take your rest; behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners."³ This last expression is a notable variant of the simple quotation from Isaias 53:12 mentioned in Luke 22:37.

Mark 14:37 ff. gives us an even greater impression of the reigning sadness. The Master finds the disciples asleep and says to Peter: "Couldst thou not watch one hour?" After going off again to pray, He returns to them and finds them still asleep. A third time He returns, and says to them: "Sleep ye now and take your rest. It is enough: the hour is come; behold, the Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of sinners." This reading contained in

² "For I say to you, that from this time I will not eat it, till it be fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Luke 22:16). "For I say to you, that I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, till the kingdom of God come. . . . This is My body, which is given for you; do this for a commemoration of Me. . . . This the chalice, the new testament in My blood, which shall be shed for you, . . . And the Son of man indeed goeth, according to that which is determined" (Luke 22:18-22). "I will not now speak many things with you" (John 14:30). "I came forth from the Father and am come into the world; again I leave the world and I go to the Father" (John 16:28).

³ With reference to this text, Fanfani (*Gli ultimi avvenimenti della vita di N. S. Gesù Cristo studiati in S. Tommaso*, p. 23) observes: "In the same way as sensible pain could be experienced by Christ, so also pain of soul, that is, affliction and sadness, indeed, a most acute sadness, could find place in Him."

Mark is of great importance for us, because we find there inserted that phrase, "It is enough," which closes the episode of the two swords in Luke.

True, the Greek text of the Gospels is not identical in the two passages: Luke has *ἰκαρόν ἐστιν*, whereas Mark has *ἀνέχει*. Also the Latin Bible translates differently, giving *satis est* in Luke and *sufficit* in Mark. Delitsch, in his Hebrew translation of the Gospels, writes *day* in Luke and *rabh li* in Mark. In general, however, most exegetes are content to give the same translation in both cases.⁴ Actually, in our view, the slight variation of the terms does not change the underlying meaning of the expression. "It is enough" in Mark tells us that during that sorrowful evening the Master has spoken a number of times to His disciples, but that on a particular occasion He prefers to cut short His words. He feels that He is alone: alone with His heavenly Father. In that hour heavy with melancholy, the great abandonment manifests itself. Jesus is not understood by His disciples, who are not able to conquer their weariness and are unable to stay awake with Him. No purpose is any longer served by disturbing their rest, for Christ already hears the rustling of the footsteps of His fatal hour. Mark's "It is enough" is thus paraphrased by Luzzi: "There is no need of further exhortations. It is too late now. My hour has struck."

In Luke the words, "It is enough," are uttered in different circumstances. The disciples have not yet thought of sleep. Jesus speaks, and finds a responsive echo in their hearts. Nevertheless, at the climax we hear the sound of the short, concise, clipped word which closes the incident. Here, too, the same state of soul is found in Jesus, that is,

⁴ Thus Luther, Cardinal Ferrari, Luzzi, Diodati, and others.

a sense of oppressive abandonment, of discouragement at not being understood. Did the Master treat of two separate subjects that evening, only to end His words each time with an expression of helplessness, perhaps different in form, but identical in meaning? Or did a single discourse, closing with a renunciation of further explanation, find a double echo in the accounts of the two Evangelists? Is Mark's "It is enough" perhaps the only sentence this Gospel preserves of the whole discourse contained in Luke 22:35-38? These questions are not easily answered. The Gospel seems to indicate that twice during the same evening Jesus had the impression of not being understood, so that twice He felt the need of breaking off His words, since an intimation had not been enough to reveal His thoughts to His hearers.

Another stylistic detail may be noted. The ordinary expression for the fulfillment of an Old Testament prophecy is *πληρώω* in the terminology of the Gospels, and this word corresponds to *le malleoth* in II Paralipomenon 36:21, with reference to a prophecy of Jeremias. In Matthew 1:22; 2:15; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 27:9; Mark 14:49; 15:28^a we regularly find *τινα πληρωθῆντα*, "that it might be fulfilled." But if we turn to the Greek text in Luke, we note immediately that *πληρώω* is missing and that its place is taken by *τέλος*, end. Therefore Luther is right when, in accord with his practice of using the verb *erfüllen* in passages treating of the fulfillment of a prophecy, he translates Luke 22:37: "Es muss noch das auch vollendet werden an mir, das geschrieben steht . . . denn was von mir geschrieben ist, das hat ein Ende."

^a This passage, however, is thought to be interpolated by the copyists. Cf. Lagrange, *Évangile selon Saint Matthieu*, p. cvi.

Michaelis also translates well: "Die Schriftwort muss sich an mir (bis zum letzten) erfüllen . . . denn mein schicksal geht jetzt seinem Ende zu." Less exact, in our judgment, are the translations of Cardinal Ferrari: "Perchè io vi dico che è necessario che si compia in me questa parola della Scrittura: . . . Infatti le cose che mi riguardano si stanno compiendo," and of Luzzi: "Perchè io vi dico che questa parola della Scrittura deve essere adempita in me. . . . Infatti le cose che mi concernono stanno per avere il loro compimento." In the reconstruction of the text made by Delitsch we need call attention only to the phrase, *ba' 'ad kisso*, "has arrived at its end."

We take the liberty of pausing a moment over the clause, *καὶ γὰρ τὰ περὶ ἐμοῦ τέλος ἔχει*, in which the words *περὶ ἐμοῦ* have the stress. In our opinion, we must carefully bear in mind a peculiarity of Haggadic literature, that is, the habit of regarding, in quotations from the Old Testament, the end of the verse, *séja' dikra*, as the technical term in Aramaic expresses it: to grasp the speaker's thought, we have to consider the verse as a whole, and not only the part he quotes. We believe that Jesus, in citing a passage from Isaias 53:12, is alluding to the content of the whole verse. He intends to say that the prophecy of Isaias is completely realized in Him, in all its painful details, down to the last and most tragic implications. He alludes not only to the fact that He will be reputed with the wicked, but also to what precedes this expression in Isaias, that is, that He will offer His life and will sustain a disgraceful death—He, who has borne the sins of many and has prayed for the transgressors. The emphasized *περὶ ἐμοῦ* means: "in Me and in no other, the prophecy of Isaias will be fulfilled to its last detail."

Therefore they translate well who, aware of the value of *τελεσθῆναι*, use *vollenden* in German; and we believe that Luther was correct when he took the words, *καὶ γὰρ τὰ περὶ ἐμοῦ*, to mean, not: "the things that concern Me," but: "what is written of Me has an end": the verse in Isaias in all the fullness of its tragic content will become a reality completely achieved, completely ended in Me, in what I am about to undergo. The basic idea is that Jesus is foretelling His approaching end. And in this end of His, and only in Him, just in Him, the ancient prophecy of Isaias will find its end, that is, its complete realization. The terms, *τελεσθῆναι* and *τέλος ἔχει*, besides clearly connoting the idea proposed by us, according to which Jesus senses that He, and He alone, is the person in whom the prophecy conveyed by Isaias is to be fulfilled in all its details, to the very end, are also important for an understanding of the entire episode narrated in Luke 22:35 ff., because they enable us to perceive that in this discourse, which is reported only in the text of St. Luke, the concept of "end" occupies an important place.

Having brought into the open these stylistic details, which, to tell the truth, are more conceptual than stylistic, we wish to undertake an investigation of the episode of the two swords in its entirety. We should note that even in the most ancient times, New Testament exegetes have had a clear perception of the difficulties involved in explaining the incident.

We shall do well to examine how the episode of the two swords is viewed in patristic exegesis. The Greeks seem to have had the notion that the project of selling a cloak in order to purchase a sword, must be taken in a figurative sense. Origen uses the passage to defend a thesis dear to

him: that the letter kills, whereas an allegorical interpretation gives life to the sacred text. St. John Chrysostom and St. Cyril of Alexandria see in the Master's words a discreet allusion to the dangers lying ahead of the apostles, and in the answer of the disciples they discern a new instance of lack of comprehension. According to St. John Chrysostom, Christ is announcing in veiled fashion the coming scene of the betrayal; the two swords are understood as indicating the two knives used to slay the paschal lamb. St. Cyril thinks that the prevision of Jesus passes beyond the immediate future: the Master is foretelling the disastrous events later to take place in Judea. But the disciples did not grasp the deep meaning of His words; they imagined that Jesus said: "Be sure to have some swords to ward off the attack which will be made against Me by those who are bent on apprehending My person." To this they replied: "Behold, here are two swords." "That is enough," Christ answered, almost with a smile, as though to say: "Two swords, indeed, to meet the war that is going to engulf the Jewish people, when thousands of swords would not be enough!"

The Latin Fathers incline toward a literal interpretation of the order to obtain a sword, but then they ask why the Master later forbids Peter to use one. St. Jerome represents Peter as saying: "Lord, why do You order me to acquire a sword and then forbid me to strike? Perhaps to teach me that I ought to be prepared to defend myself, but that it is not necessary for me to stand on my rights." St. Augustine thinks that "the Lord surely had some hidden purpose in mind when He commanded His followers to bear arms which He later forbade them to use."⁶ As

⁶ We may be permitted to recall that Tertullian, in protesting against the

Joseph Lecler notes in his illuminating account of this learned literature, a symbolic element is present in all these explanations.⁷ The Greeks regard the acquisition of swords as a metaphor, and the Latins perceive hidden depths in the prohibition against using a sword which Christ had ordered to be purchased. For St. Ambrose, the two swords represent the Old and the New Testament, and Christ's words, "It is enough," signify that nothing is lacking to him who is armed with the doctrine of the two Testaments. Venerable Bede says: "The two swords are sufficient as witnesses of the voluntary passion of the Savior, the one to show us, on the side of the apostles, their bravery in the service of the Master, and, on the side of the Master who was about to die, His mercy and power to effect cures; the other, which was to remain in its scabbard, to teach us that the apostles were not allowed to do all in their power for the defense of the Master."

The symbolism is based on a series of sayings contained in St. Paul's epistles. In Romans 13:4 we are told that the magistrate "beareth not the sword in vain. For he is God's minister, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doth evil." And in Ephesians 6:17 we read: "Take unto you the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."⁸ St. Gregory the Great says that Phinees

enlistment of Christians in the armed services, says: "Can it ever be permitted to become familiar with the sword, since the time when the Lord proclaimed that anyone using the sword shall perish by the sword? Can the son of peace, who is not even permitted to quarrel with his brother, engage in conflict?"

⁷ "L'argument des deux glaives dans les controverses politiques du Moyen Age," *Recherches de science religieuse*, XXI (1931), 302.

⁸ Cf. Isa. 9:5; Heb. 4:12. The sword as symbol of anathema of enemies is celebrated in a Hebrew legend reported in Streck-Billerbeck, *Kommentar*, I, 730. Judas Machabeus had the following vision in a dream. The high priest, Onias (III) was praying with outstretched arms for the people of Israel. Then there appeared to him a man of dignified aspect and gray hair, with an air of marvelous majesty. And Onias said: "This is a lover of his brethren, he who prays

placated God's anger with his sword by chastising impurity, and that Peter with his sword struck and slew those who dared to tell a lie.

Some years before his coronation, about 798, Charlemagne, an ardent student of the Bible and of the Fathers of the Church, one day came upon the exegetical difficulty in Luke 22:35-28. He wrote to Alcuin, his counsellor and theologian: "There is a passage in the Gospel according to St. Luke in which Christ our Saviour, on the point of entering on His passion, orders His disciples to sell their coats and purses and to buy swords. And when they answer that they have two swords, He says: 'It is enough.' I suppose that Peter used one of these two swords to cut off the ear of Malchus. But then the Master said to him: 'Put up thy sword into the scabbard; all those who take up a sword will perish by the sword.' Does it not seem to you that He contradicts Himself in first ordering the sale of the coat in order to buy a sword, and then, almost immediately after, declaring that they who take the sword will perish by the sword? If the sword is the word of God,⁹ if the Lord meant the word of God when He gave the order to buy a sword, how can He say that all those who receive the word of God will perish by the word of God?"

In his answer, Alcuin first goes over the many symbolic meanings of "sword," with the respective scriptural texts on which they rest. Having disposed of these preliminaries, he easily removes the contradiction that had occurred to the king's mind. "We are not always obliged," he says, "to

much for the people and for the holy city, Jeremias the prophet of God." But Jeremias stretched forth his hand and gave to Judas a sword of gold, saying: "Take the holy sword as a gift from God; with it you will destroy the enemy." CL II Mach. 15:12-16.

⁹ See Eph. 6:17, mentioned above.

interpret 'sword' as 'word of God.' In the present case we have a sword which is pleasing to Christ and which is to be acquired, namely, the word of God; but there is another sword which displeases Him and which He orders to be put back into the scabbard, namely, *revenge for injuries*." After analyzing the symbolic meaning of the purse and the coat, he comes to the two swords. "These," he says, "are the soul and the body in which every man has to do battle, in the measure of the grace given to him by God and according to the Lord's will. And it will be 'enough' for God's will if we carry out His commandments in our body and with our soul." To the question, why one of the two swords is to remain in the scabbard, he replies: "We have said that the two swords signify the body and the soul; they ought to act under the impulse of a single faith in such a way that the faith hidden in the soul may manifest itself outwardly in works by means of the body."

We are still far from the priesthood and the empire; but only in appearance. Since the priest is given charge over spiritual functions and the ruler over material and corporal affairs, may we not perhaps say that they are related as body and soul, and therefore could not the symbolism of the two swords be applied to them with equal propriety? Alcuin does not reach this conclusion in his letter; but not long after, when Charlemagne had become the undisputed head of the spiritual and temporal power of the Church, Alcuin writes to him: "The divine power has armed Your venerated Excellency with these two swords." Is he perhaps alluding, Lecler asks, to the text in St. Luke? At any rate, it is certain that from that time on, the practice of interpreting the two swords as signs of royal and sacerdotal power is the order of the day, as is attested by a vast

literature, propounded by Lecler with incomparable erudition. The dominant note is invariably the following: "Happy is he who joins the sword of kingship with the sword of priesthood, so that the sword of the priest may moderate the king's sword, and the sword of the king may sharpen the priest's sword. These are the two swords."

Throughout the Middle Ages, the episode of the two swords is for the most part interpreted in a symbolic sense, in connection with the ceaseless conflict between the empire and the papacy.

Interest in the question is as lively as ever among scholars of our time, but the interpretations of the passage are still very divergent, so that we cannot say that a definitive solution has been reached. Solomon Reinach, for example, supposes that the source from which Luke drew is Judges 7:14, 20, where mention is made of two swords, that of Yahweh and that of Gedeon, with which the Midianites were conquered. This hypothesis is considered unacceptable by Goguel, because the text is not explicitly cited in Luke's Gospel. We may be permitted to remark, in addition, that in the chapter from Judges there is question of only one sword, not of two swords, one for the Lord and one for Gedeon. Besides, any admission that the passage in Luke we are examining may be a literary reminiscence, is an error in psychology.

Wellhausen thinks that the fragment is composed of several elements, and maintains that the idea of the two swords in the possession of the disciples comes down from an ancient tradition, the historicity of which is vouched for by the incident of the wounding of the high priest's servant by a cut from a sword at the moment of Christ's

arrest.¹⁰ Goguel, after weighing these interpretations and others like them, proposes a new explanation on his own account.¹¹ According to him, Jesus, seeing that He was threatened, uttered a word of bitter irony. Drawing His inspiration, as Luke says, from the text in *Isaias* 53:12, or, more simply, realizing the situation in which He found Himself, He may have said to His disciples: "Since we are being treated like brigands, let us also act like brigands. To arms!" The disciples would then have exhibited the only two swords or daggers¹² they had with them. Goguel concludes: "A fine band of brigands, this company of twelve men who, to rob passing strangers and to resist armed force, can scarcely produce two swords, and think that enough!" Nor does he accept the suggestion of Robert Eisler, according to whom we ought to read: "They produced two swords, naturally, two for each man." Goguel's theory is evidently inspired by Luke 22:52, where Jesus says to the priests and elders who were closing in around Him: "Are ye come out, as it were against a thief, with swords and clubs?" But, if we may interject a remark, the choice of this statement of Jesus as a point of departure for the supposition that He had proposed to the disciples a life of brigandage, strikes us as a complete and methodical error.

Meyer, following Wellhausen, holds that the disciples' answer, "Lord, behold here are two swords," is connected

¹⁰ *Mark* 14:47. In connection with this incident, we read in *Tonna-Barthet, Il Vangelo commentato da S. Agostino*, pp. 410 f. "With this gesture the disciple meant to defend the Master and was not thinking of the mysterious significance of his act. Jesus wished to teach him patience, and at the same time to show us that this event was written for our instruction."

¹¹ *La vie de Jésus*, pp. 458 f.

¹² Since, so far as is known, the Hebrews were forbidden to carry arms, Goguel thinks that perhaps the two swords in question were rather daggers, which could easily be concealed in one's clothing.

with an attempt at armed resistance which Jesus first approved but later forbade, seeing the meagerness of their resources. He cites also *Matthew* 10:34: "Do not think that I came to send peace upon earth: I came not to send peace but the sword." Besides, he links up the incident of the two swords with *Luke* 12:51, where the Master says: "Think ye that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, no; but separation."¹³

Michaelis likewise refers to *Luke* 22:51, where Jesus forbids the use of arms in His defense and heals the wounded servant, and concludes that Jesus is against the use of arms.¹⁴ Therefore he thinks that the words, "It is enough," do not mean that two swords suffice for the defense, but indicate that Jesus is giving up any further discussion, "perhaps because He knows He will be misunderstood."

Rossi comments: "It is the hour of battle. While Christ was with His loved ones, they lacked nothing; but now they are left alone. They must arm for the conflict and fortify themselves against the scandal of His last hours." The disciples "do not understand the figurative sense of the encumbering cloak, which has to be exchanged for a sword that may be easily seized for defense or offense. Peter is surely among them, and he bursts out: 'Here are two swords!' They were perhaps the knives used for carving the paschal lamb. They are now brought forward for defense against the dreaded traitor. . . . 'It is enough' is a mournful sigh breathed by Jesus, who saw He was not understood. He does not insist. He will be understood later."¹⁵

¹³ Meyer, *Ursprung und Anfänge des Christentums*, I, 182.

¹⁴ *Das Neue Testament*, p. 369.

¹⁵ *Il Vangelo secondo Luca*, pp. 218 f.

Lagrange offers the following explanation of the entire incident narrated in Luke 22:35-38. "All was now so different from what it was before. In former times it had been so pleasant when they had been able to rely upon the general sympathy shown to them, or at all events on the traditional hospitality of the country. In those days Jesus had sent His disciples out to preach without money or wallet, even without shoes. But now, if a man was not well provided with the necessities of life, the only thing to do was to sell his cloak and buy a sword so as to obtain food by violence. Here was an evil and extreme state of things to which Jesus most certainly never advised His disciples to have recourse; but it well describes the accusations which will be leveled against them; for in their Master is about to be fulfilled that word of Isaias relating to the suffering servant of God: 'He hath been reckoned with the wicked.' His office among men was soon to come to an end. The mention of the sword arouses the attention of these Galileans, ever quick to come to blows. They have two swords, probably brought in case of emergency. But Jesus has no wish to be defended by the sword, and when later on it leaves its scabbard He will say so plainly. Therefore, when they now tell Him: 'Lord, behold here are two swords,' He answers smilingly [as St. Cyril of Alexandria had already remarked]: 'It is enough.' He has yet to speak on a more important subject."¹⁶

Klausner, unlike Lagrange, interprets the words, "It is enough," uttered when the two swords were produced, in the sense that Jesus actually thought of armed opposition.¹⁷ Klausner thinks that Luke, who is very exact in

¹⁶ *The Gospel of Jesus Christ*, II, 211.

¹⁷ *Jesus of Nazareth*, p. 331.

describing the arrest and the trial, would not have reported the episode of the two swords had he not found it in old and reliable records. Robert Eisler goes a step farther and concludes that Jesus was a revolutionary messiah, and that He and His followers found themselves embroiled in a tremendous, bloody conflict with the Romans, a conflict in which the little band headed by Jesus had to bow in defeat.¹⁸ The result was that Jesus and Barabbas were crucified as revolutionaries. Klausner does not share this idea, because, he thinks, if Jesus had been a revolutionary who had failed miserably, He would have been covered with opprobrium, like many another political pseudo-messiah. In Klausner's opinion, the incident of the two swords shows only that Jesus did not always wage war with spiritual weapons; at the right time and place He could turn His mind to the possibility of armed self-defense. Thus Eisler uses the unpretentious and obscure incident of the two swords to construct an extremely hazardous theory exhibiting Jesus as a sanguinary revolutionist. Klausner does not go that far, but nevertheless sees Jesus as a man ready to organize armed defense.

What can be brought in to consolidate the two theories at their base? The solution proposed is this. The Evangelists have sought to cover up every trace of Christ's revolutionary and sanguinary spirit, and, not content with this, have even presented Him as a man who saw the end of the world at hand, who announced the kingdom of heaven, and who voluntarily offered to expiate the world's sins with His own sufferings and death. But in re-creating Christ's life, in inverting all values, in covering the whole reality with a heavy veil, in reconstructing an invented,

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 338, 391.

fantastic story on the ruins of historical facts, Luke has let slip a tiny error: he has allowed the episode of the two swords to survive, an episode that cannot square with the picture of a Christ who predicts, foresees, offers to die and desires to die, the death of a martyr.

If we reflect on this whole vast literature dealing with the passage in Luke 22:35 ff.,¹⁹ we come upon explanations that we simply cannot accept. How utterly bizarre appears the interpretation Goguel gives to this sublime episode in the life of Christ! Are we to suppose that Jesus, during the last evening He spends in the company of His disciples, at the beginning of that night He will pass in solitary prayer, overcome by an indescribable sadness, at the approach of His great hour, would have spoiled the "nobility and grandeur of those last moments,"²⁰ by employing irony and inviting His intimates to arm themselves for the purpose of robbing chance wayfarers? Had He not taught that we must love our enemies, forgive everyone his offenses, make ourselves worthy of the kingdom of heaven, be gentle, and administer consolation to those in sorrow?

No less unacceptable is the theory of Eisler, who sees in the disciples of Jesus soldiers armed, each of them contrary to every strategic principle, with two swords; which makes us think of those murderous zealots of the time of Titus, whose notorious memory survives in the pages of Flavius Josephus.

We also beg leave to lodge some objections against the

¹⁹ Obviously we have not been able to read all the authors who treat the question.

²⁰ With these words Tondelli (*Gesù Cristo*, p. 525) describes the atmosphere which surrounded Jesus that evening, and which was not allowed to be disturbed by any scene of violence.

interpretation given by Lagrange. According to him, Jesus tells the disciples that they must sell even their cloaks to buy swords, as they will be able to obtain food for themselves only by laying hold of the sword. Has this prevision ever been verified? Has any information come down to us that the apostles procured their miserable rations by requiring delivery of food at the point of the sword? Moreover, if Jesus orders Peter to return the sword to its scabbard after the latter has drawn it out to defend his Master,²¹ on the ground that all who take the sword shall perish by the sword,²² how could He have permitted the disciples to use the sword for the purpose of procuring food? In that case, would they not have marched straight toward the same disaster? And in any event, if they had been ordered or advised to seize the sword at a later time for utilitarian purposes, would not its use have been much more justified in the service of the Master's person? Nor, in general, do we like the explanation which many modern authors share with ancient writers of the Church, that the incident of the two swords refers to an act of self-defense which had been, if not recommended, at any rate not at first forbidden by Jesus.

Dalman likewise maintains that Jesus and His disciples were evidently preparing for armed resistance. Alluding to Luke 22:38, he says: "Already in the hall of the paschal sacrifice two swords were at hand to defend Jesus against the lot destined for Him in Isaías 53:12. At the time of the arrest that same night, a sword was drawn in His defense (Matt. 26:51; Mark 14:47; Luke 22:50). Similarly the police sent by the high priests (*sic*) were armed with

²¹ John 18:11.

²² Matt. 26:52.

swords and clubs (Matt. 26:47, 55; Mark 14:45, 48; Luke 22:52).²²

But if the episode of the two swords really evoked the idea of a preparation for armed defense, we ought to suppose that the apostles, with the consent of Jesus, made ready to engage in battle on the grounds of the prophecy of Isaias. On the other hand, if Jesus and His disciples were persuaded that the events about to take place were to be the fulfillment of a prophecy of Isaias, what purpose could the shedding of blood have served? Could the fulfillment of what was foretold by a prophet such as Isaias, who was considered the mouthpiece of the divine will, have been impeded? Was he dependent on the issue of a trial of arms? Are we to admit that Jesus and His disciples used the prophecy of Isaias in order to adopt in good time the very measures designed to counteract its realization? That they would have considered it a sort of advice to put themselves on guard? That they would not have believed deeply in the absolute necessity of the prophecy's fulfillment? On the contrary, we know that the Gospel regards and exhibits all the events respecting the life of Jesus as a continual verification of the Old Testament prophecies, for in those facts is perceived the intervention of the divine will foretold many centuries back, through the agency of the prophets.

Again, is the episode of the amputation of the ear by Peter and its miraculous restoration by Jesus of such a nature as to indicate by itself the planning of a bloody battle?²³ And can knowledge of this event induce us to sup-

²² *Jesus-Jeschua*, p. 89.

²³ With reference to this episode, M. Kostovtzeff (*Die Bekehrung des Judas*, *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, XXXIII (1934), 196 L) mentions a similar incident that occurred in 183 B.C. in Tebtunis in Egypt, and concludes:

pose that in the eyes of Jesus and the apostles the prophecy of Isaias could be annulled? To our mind, Dalman's idea seems to bristle with difficulties and to be completely untenable.

However, we also find that the various exegetes contribute brilliant suggestions. First of all, we welcome the idea proposed by Wellhausen, who thinks that the passage in question is composed of several fragments and reflects some ancient traditions. This conviction is more or less shared by Klausner, who says that Luke undoubtedly found the incident of the two swords in old and reliable records.²⁴

Several Fathers of the Church, in our estimation, have given interesting comments on particular phases of the episode. St. John Chrysostom asks: "He who has counseled the turning of the other cheek (Matt. 5:39), now arms His followers, but with only one sword; against a mob and hostile soldiers, what good was one sword to simple fishermen? Accordingly He means only that a war unto death is imminent." The words, "war unto death," may not be wholly exact. In general, however, we may say that Chrysostom's conception as a whole is undoubtedly most admirable. Perhaps he errs in explaining the *satis est* by saying, "If He wished to have recourse to human aid,

"The intention was not to inflict a grave wound on the servant, but to perform a symbolic act. The purpose was to show that the adversary was a despicable person, not worth killing; it was sufficient to mutilate him. This may also have been the intention of the disciple of Jesus. The chief of police, who was probably not a Hebrew but a Syrian, would forever carry about the marks of his shame." If this explanation is accepted, the incident loses all or nearly all the value assigned to it by certain exegetes, that is, its function in supporting the shaky edifice of the idea of an armed defense undertaken by Jesus and His disciples.

²⁴ According to Harnack also, Luke has used written sources, unknown to us, for the first part of his narrative. Cf. Buonaiuti, *Manuale introduttivo alla Storia del Cristianesimo*, I, 130.

a hundred swords were not enough; and if He did not, even two swords were superfluous," since the words, "It is enough," as we have shown, have nothing to do with the sword. But the interpretation of *satis est* proposed by Theophylactus is excellent. He observes, with delicate good sense: "The Lord does not reprove them for their lack of understanding, nor does He waste time disputing in that extremity, but He says, 'It is sufficient,' just as someone might say to us in closing a discussion, 'Very well, that's enough.'" However, St. Cyril of Alexandria says that the disciples "do not understand, and think that Christ wishes the traitor to be resisted."²⁶

In our day, likewise, various scholars have come to the conclusion that Jesus was misunderstood or, to state it better, was not understood by His disciples,²⁷ and that, in discouragement, He thought it well to break off the conversation. We share the conviction that the episode of the two swords bears the impress of a serious lack of comprehension on the part of the disciples. Several times that evening they showed that they had not risen to the sublimity of the occasion. Not only were they incapable of overcoming sleep and remaining on the watch with their Master, but they were unable even to catch the force of His various utterances.

When Christ says, "And whither I go you know, and the way you know," one of the disciples answers: "Lord, we know not whither Thou goest, and how can we know the way?" (John 14:4 f.). In connection with the words spoken by Jesus and reported by St. John, "A little while, and

²⁶ For these quotations we have drawn on Thomas Aquinas, *Catena aurea in quatuor Evangelia* (ed. Marietti), II, 318.

²⁷ The masses likewise frequently failed to understand or misunderstood Jesus, as the Gospels themselves attest. Cf., e.g., John 8:37; 10:6.

now you shall not see Me; and again a little while, and you shall see Me; because I go to the Father,"²⁸ the remark has well been made: "The events foretold by Jesus were so obscure for the disciples before their fulfillment, that they asked one another what He was talking about and admitted that they understood nothing."²⁹ So true is this that the Gospel adds: "Then some of His disciples said one to another: What is this that He saith to us: A little while, and you shall not see Me; and again a little while, and you shall see Me, and, because I go to the Father?" The embarrassment in which the disciples find themselves does not escape the Master. The Evangelist continues: "And Jesus knew that they had a mind to ask Him; and He said to them: Of this do you inquire among yourselves, because I said: A little while and you shall not see Me; and again a little while, and you shall see Me? Amen, amen I say to you, that you shall lament and weep, but the world shall rejoice; and you shall be made sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy." According to St. Augustine, these words mean "that the disciples of Jesus were plunged into grief by our Lord's death, but shortly thereafter they were filled with joy by His glorious resurrection."

However, as regards the incident of the two swords, Jesus did not try to correct the misunderstanding caused by His words. Perhaps He was altogether too wearied. He perceived all too clearly that, at least for the time being, His pupils did not possess the ability to comprehend Him. Or may it be that He did not wish to clear up the equivocation? What, then, was the object of His discourse?

²⁸ John 16:16-20.

²⁹ Tonna-Barthet, *Il Vangelo commentato da S. Agostino*, pp. 375 f.

Are we today in a position to reconstruct His intimate thought?

We believe that we can make an attempt. But to come to some conclusion, we may not rest content with examining in themselves the few disconnected bits of the event that have come down to us. We have to recall the entire personality of Jesus, the way He habitually expressed Himself, and the state of His soul on that particular evening. Jesus foresees His approaching death. He would like to inform His disciples of this fact on the last night of His association with them, but He will not and cannot make known His thought in plain and simple language. He will not and cannot announce the close of His life in a brusque, prosaic manner.

Expertly versed as He was in the prophetic literature,²⁰ Christ evidently employed the vaticinal method in use among the Old Testament prophets, that is, the method of allusion, based on *m'shalim*, parables.²¹ Let us recall a vision of the prophet Amos: "These things the Lord showed to me; and behold *k'lubh kayis*, a hook to draw down the fruit [or; a basket of summer fruit]. And He said: What seest thou Amos? And I said: *k'lubh kayis*. And the Lord said to me: *Ba'hak-kes*, the end is come upon My

²⁰ We should remember that in the synagogues Jesus used to read and interpret texts from the Old Testament prophets.

²¹ Jesus Himself refers to His practice of speaking in parables: "The hour cometh when I will no more speak to you in proverbs, but will show you plainly of the Father" (John 16:25). St. Paul may be thinking of this utterance when he says: "We see now through a glass in a dark manner" (1 Cor. 13:12). On mirrors, whether used as gems for ornamentation, as astrological instruments, or as magical devices, see A. Marmorstein, "The 'Mirror' in Jewish Religious Life," *Studie Materiali per la Storia delle Religioni*, VIII (1932), 37-41; Emanuel Löw, "Aspaqlatia," in *Sefer ha-jobbel*, issued in honor of Sam. Krauss (Jerusalem, 1937), pp. 10-14; Juda Bergmann, "Die Schicksalserforschung der römischen Kaiser in der Agada," *Monatschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums*, LXXXI (1937), 478 f.

people Israel."²² The object seen was to foretell the disaster hanging over the nation. In reality, what did the vision have in common with the prediction? An assonance, and one not so very close at that: namely, the assonance between *kayis*, summer, and *kes*, end. To preserve this play on words, the Aramaic paraphrase uses the term *kissa* (end), which is similar in sound to *kayta* (basket), although for "end" Aramaic has another word much more commonly used. Jeremias²³ and Ezechiel²⁴ mention certain symbolic actions, such as breaking a vessel, placing a yoke on the neck, cutting, burning, and scattering the hair of the head, to foretell a catastrophe impending over Israel. Also the prophet Ahias performs a symbolic action.²⁵

As He had announced to Amos, so also to Jeremias the Lord announces, by means of a symbol, a disaster drawing close to the people. God turns to the afflicted prophet and asks: "What seest thou?" And he answers: "I see a boiling caldron (*sir nazuah*),²⁶ and the face thereof from the face of the north (*sasonah*)."²⁷ And the Lord said: "From the north shall an evil break forth upon all the inhabitants of the land."²⁸ The caldron boiling over evidently represents the catastrophe, but the essential point is the fact that its front is facing toward the north. Another time the Lord asks the prophet: "What seest thou, Jeremias?" And he replies: "I see a rod watching (*makkel shoked*)."²⁹ And the

²² Amos 8:1 f.

²³ Jer. 19:10 ff.; 27:2 ff.

²⁴ Ezech. 5:1 f.

²⁵ Cf. III Kings 11:31.

²⁶ According to J. Hempel, in *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, XIII (1936), 152, by *sir nazuah* the prophet means a sort of magic pot, a Pandora's vase, in which are contained the evils threatening Israel.

²⁷ Jer. 1:13 f.

Lord says: "Thou hast seen well, for I will watch well (*ki shoked* **ni*) over My word to perform it."²⁸ Here we have an exact repetition of the term, for the word *shoked* means "one who hurries" and at the same time an almond tree, which more than any other "hurries" in the spring to open its blossoms.

These few typical instances of prophetic symbolism are enough to enable us to understand its nature. At times, a symbolic action serves to arouse the attention of those present and to begin a discourse that will end with a prophecy on an approaching national calamity. In other cases, a single word, similar in sound to the name of the object appearing in the vision, suffices to begin the discourse in which the Lord informs the prophet about the disaster that is drawing near. Yet again, it is enough for the sound of a word to recall another word having a sinister connotation.

If we examine the various translations of the Gospel text under consideration, we do not find that they have anything in common with the stylistic phenomena encountered in the selections from the prophets we have just listed. But here we have to take cognizance of another highly important fact that should not be overlooked in interpreting passages from the New Testament: at the time of Jesus, Aramaic was spoken. Therefore we must turn to this language and see whether it can be of any help. The word "end," which, as we showed above, is so clearly conveyed by the Greek text in the terms *τέλος* and *τελεσθήσας*, and which is doubtless a very important element in the Master's discourse, is *səʃa'* in Aramaic (consonants *samekh*, *yod*, *peh*, *alef*). The word

²⁸ Jer. 1:11 f.

"sword," which immediately precedes, in Aramaic is *say'ʃa'* or *sey'ʃa'* (consonants: *samekh*, *yod*, *peh*, *alef*).²⁹ The same word, composed of the same consonants and even of the same vowels, with at most a very slight change in the first vowel, means "sword" as well as "end." If the Master, in an atmosphere heavy with sadness and gloom, speaks of the "sword" and of His approaching "end," to what should the thoughts of His disciples be directed? They should have glimpsed a connection between the two meanings conveyed by the same word, and should have perceived that the Master was alluding to the fact that He would be pierced through by His enemies.

To be condemned to death was expressed by the phrase: to die by the sword. As Samuel Krauss points out in his *Perek bejissure ha-guf*,³⁰ with quotations of pertinent Talmudic passages, the heads of those condemned to death were cut off with a sword, after the practice in use by the (Roman) government. Under Roman influence, the doctors of the Talmud declared death by the sword the better

²⁹ The Aramaic paraphrases on the Pentateuch (for variations in Mishnic language, see Albeck, *Untersuchungen über die Redaktion der Mischna*, p. 73) give us for the Hebrew *heresh* (sword), sometimes *harba'*, sometimes *say'ʃa'*. This latter term was certainly used at the time of Jesus, since, even if the definitive redaction of the Targumim came five centuries later, we have to admit—as is noted by Eissfeldt, *Einführung in das A. T.*, p. 710—that large portions of their texts belong to the pre-Christian period, thus representing a more ancient form of the Masoretic text in its final redaction. That the term *say'ʃa'* was in use at the time of the Roman domination in Judea, and that it lent itself to plays on words, is clear from the following example, contained in Baba bathra 4 a: "The Romans said to Herod: *i say'ʃak* 'alākha *saʃra'* *kaan*, even if you wear your sword, the book is there" (that is, the book in which is registered your Idumaean origin, as a slave of the Machabees). In 'Alchedah Zarath 17 b, a learned man accused of being a criminal says: *i saʃra la sayyata i sayyata la saʃra*, if a person is a scholar, he is not armed with a sword, and if a person is armed with a sword, he is not a scholar.

³⁰ In the review, *Debbir*, Berlin, 1923, pp. 104 f. The Roman *poena capitalis* corresponds to the *ha-thazath ha-rosh* of Talmudic literature. Cf. Krauss, *ibid.*, p. 96.

death, preferable to execution by the axe (*kopis*). In the *Tosefta Sanhedrin IX* we read: "Four kinds of death are entrusted to the Hebrew tribunal; but to it (that is, to the Roman authorities) only death by means of the sword (*sayif*) has been entrusted." A notable item is contained in *Leviticus 24:17*: "He that striketh and killeth a man, dying let him die." The *Targum Jonathan ben 'Uziel* adds on its own account to the Aramaic translation, *moth yumath* (he shall be put to death), the word *b'sayfa*, with the sword. The commentators say: "Since there is question of punishment for homicide, the *Targum* has thought it well to add, 'with the sword,' as otherwise strangulation would be thought of, in view of the fact that whenever the *Torah* mentions the death sentence, the supposition is that the punishment of *henek*, or strangulation, is meant."

The third-century Christian author of the *Philosophumena*, IX, 30, says: "The Hebrews assert that the Messiah will derive his origin from the family of David, but that He will not be born of a virgin by the Holy Spirit, but of a man and a woman in the same way as all men. . . . He will be a king over all men, a warrior and a powerful man, who will gather together the whole race of the Hebrews, will wage war against all nations, and will build up Jerusalem again for the Hebrews as the royal city, where He will assemble all the people and restore them to their ancient station, so that it may reign, administer the sacrificial cult, and live for a long time in peace. Later a war will be waged against them all, and in that conflict the Messiah will fall by the sword."⁴¹

Rudolph Otto, with whom Heiler agrees, maintains that Jesus expected death by stoning rather than death on

⁴¹ This passage is cited by Scheftelowitz, *Die Christusmythe*, p. 4.

the cross. Otto does not mention death by the sword, yet he excludes crucifixion.⁴² The earliest Hebrew notices about Jesus do not speak of crucifixion. *Deuteronomy 21:23*, according to which a corpse ought not to remain overnight on the tree (on which a criminal was hanged), as that would be an affront against God,⁴³ is not referred to by Jesus. In the *Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 46 b* we find the following parable. Of two twin brothers who resembled each other closely, one became a powerful king and the other was crucified for his crimes. And the passers-by said: "It is just as if the king were on the cross." For this reason the king had the corpse taken down. The purpose of this parable was to teach, as Bergmann rightly observed,⁴⁴ that man is made to the likeness of God, and that therefore the permitting of a corpse to remain hanging was equivalent to committing a sacrilege. But they err who pretend to see in this text a reference to Jesus.

For that matter, the New Testament itself leads us to suppose that Jesus and His contemporary followers likewise thought of the sword, if not as the instrument of His death, at any rate as something associated with His death. In *John 19:31-37* the Evangelist, after noting the fact that the legs of Jesus were not broken (for the purpose, evidently, of calling attention to the verification of the scriptural prediction that "You shall not break a bone of him"), and after narrating that "one of the soldiers with a spear opened His side, and immediately there came out blood

⁴² Following Didon, P. Fantani (*Gli ultimi avvenimenti della vita di N. S. Gesù Cristo*, p. 34) notes that the penalty of the cross was unknown to Jewish law.

⁴³ Similarly Lattanzio observes that the Christians regarded it as an abomination if a body, *figura et similitudinem* of the divinity, remained unburied.

⁴⁴ *Jüdische Apologetik im neutestamentlichen Zeitalter*, p. 56, n. 4.

and water," adds: "And he that saw it hath given testimony, and his testimony is true, and he knoweth that he saith true; that you also may believe." He goes on to say that this fact, too, had to take place, so that Scripture might be fulfilled: "They shall look on him whom they pierced." As we see clearly, the verification of the prophecy that the Messiah was to be pierced, was of fundamental importance for the Evangelist.

The learned and incisive study presented by Lietzmann to the Prussian Academy of Sciences,⁴⁵ is an authoritative confirmation of the historicity of the crucifixion. Nevertheless the piercing by the sword or spear, whichever it may have been, could not have remained unrealized. And St. John guarantees the historicity of the fact in the most solemn fashion. Such a narration plus the Evangelist's insistence in emphasizing its authenticity, demonstrates irrefutably that Jesus, in speaking under the form of allegory of His approaching end, must have thought of the sword as associated with His death. With His deep insight into the prophetic texts and especially of those possessing a messianic character, he unquestionably was conscious of the prophecy contained in Zacharias: "And they shall look upon me whom they have pierced" (Zach. 12:10).

According to the teaching of the Gospel, is not the figure described in Zacharias,⁴⁶ like the servant of God of Isaias, a prefigure of Christ? We find the following passage written in Zacharias 12:10-13:1: "And I will pour out upon the house of David and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of prayers: and they shall

⁴⁵ *Der Prozess Jesu*, Sonderausgabe aus den Sitzungsberichten der preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-Hist. Kl. (Berlin: 1931), IV.

⁴⁶ Chapters 9-14, which are referred to several times in the Gospels, belong to Zacharias.

look upon me, whom they have pierced: and they shall mourn for him as one mourneth for an only son, and they shall grieve over him, as the manner is to grieve for the death of the firstborn. In that day there shall be a great lamentation in Jerusalem, like the lamentation of Adadremmon. . . . In that day there shall be a fountain open to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem; for the washing of the sinner and of the unclean woman." The slain man so bitterly mourned by the whole populace is, according to Sellin, the person of a martyr, the spiritual guide of the masses, a man in whose living presence the populace had assumed a demeanor of ingratitude that ignored his greatness, but whose greatness was recognized when the time of salvation and purification began.⁴⁷ Nothing can be done to identify the figure of the martyr. Yet we can assert that he was a shepherd of souls, who represented God in the midst of the people, but who was repudiated.

A noteworthy fact is that the wailing raised for the stabbed man is compared with that raised for the divinity Hadad-Rimmon, the Babylonian-Assyrian god of the tempest, whom the Bible sometimes calls Rimmon, at other times Hadad. The name, Hadad, may be linked with that of Adon, the god who, as is known, bewails death every year. However that may be, we have here a parallel between the grief for the pierced shepherd and the lament for the death of a god,⁴⁸ in the same way as the style which describes the death of the servant of God in Isaias, chapter 53, recalls the lament for the death of the god Tammuz.

⁴⁷ *Das Zwölfprophetenbuch*, p. 578.

⁴⁸ See the penetrating remarks of Hempel, *Die althebräische Literatur und ihr hellenistisch-jüdisches Nachleben*, p. 28.

Without going to the bottom of the historical problem, and desirous in this study, as in the others that make up this book, of correctly interpreting the Gospel text in the light of Old Testament and rabbinical thought, we wish merely to state that either the Master Himself in His previsions and prophecies, or the ancient source from which the Evangelist drew, could have had in mind the pastor of souls in Deutero-Zacharias, the messianic figure that was despised, tortured, pierced, and mourned as a god.

The tragic death of this shepherd, according to Sellin,⁴⁹ is mentioned also in Zacharias 13:7: "Awake, O sword, against My shepherd and against the man that cleaveth to Me, saith the Lord of hosts; strike the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered." And in fact this verse is quoted in part by Jesus when He alludes to His approaching end.⁵⁰ Hence it is more than probable that, identifying Himself with the stabbed shepherd, He foresees a similar fate in store for Him.⁵¹ In the allegory, Jesus refers to the sword only because it was the instrument most commonly used in carrying out the death sentence, and because His end, brilliantly set forth in messianic light, was to be that which, according to ancient tradition, awaited the Messiah.

To sum up, we are of the opinion that Jesus, in the discourse reported in Luke 22:35 ff., alluded to the sword as an instrument associated with His death. He was deter-

⁴⁹ *Das Zweite Prophetenbuch*, p. 567.

⁵⁰ Matt. 26:31 and Mark 14:27.

⁵¹ Not only the mysterious and sorrowful figure, but also, according to Zach. 13:3, anyone who dared to prophesy faced death by the sword. Here, too, characteristically, we have the verb *udkarahu*, "they shall thrust him through," as in the case of the shepherd. The death of Jesus by crucifixion, historically certain, does not render less historical the fact that He was pierced with a sword (or lance).

mined to face death. The disciples did not grasp the underlying import of His words, and He did not help them toward a clarification, as He had done on other occasions when they were perplexed, since the manner in which He was to undergo death was not of prime importance for the future of Christianity and for faith in His resurrection and the kingdom of heaven. Explicit mention of the matter would have overwhelmed His pupils with grief, and besides would have been out of harmony with the tone of the discourses of that evening, which were all in the form of parables and were allusive in character. Huby aptly describes the utterances made by Jesus that memorable evening when he says that they were "sentences mingling shadow and light which allowed a glimpse into the future without revealing it clearly."⁵²

The following is the way we reconstruct, as a whole, the scene between Jesus and His disciples at the close of that last supper.

The Master begins to speak in a low, gentle voice, telling the apostles that they must provide themselves with a purse, a traveling bag, and shoes. Then He remains silent for a while, as though gauging the effect of His words on the little group of hearers. The Twelve should have understood that He meant to say: "We have come to the parting of the ways. Everything is changed. Up to now I have provided the modest necessities of your life; but I shall not be with you any more." But His thought found no response in the minds of the disciples. Then, after a pause, He begins to speak again, but of a subject not closely connected with what went before. Only a lack of understanding on the part of later readers has linked up in a rather

⁵² *Le discours de Jésus après la cène*, p. 35.

unfortunate way the idea of selling the cloak with that of buying a sword.

After a long silence, not seeing any sign of comprehension drawing in the eyes of the apostles, Christ alludes to His death in a more explicit manner and in a deeply prophetic form: "The end is drawing near: the biblical verse that speaks of the innocent man reckoned among criminals points to Me as its end (*séja'*)."⁵² At the same time He interjects, in a way that we cannot exactly reconstruct today, the word and idea of "sword." Probably He alludes to the sword as the symbol of His approaching end. And He associates *say'a'* and *séja'* in such a manner that the mind has to make but a single step to discern His meaning. His thought could have been followed without difficulty, for the key had been supplied in the preceding sentences. But apparently neither this significant word nor the linking of the ideas of *say'a'* and *séja'*, the end and the sword, or the end by the sword, has enlightened the minds of His hearers.

Should He have said outright, "Have you not understood Me yet? Very well, I shall tell you: Soon I shall die and I shall be pierced with a sword"? Such a mode of speech was not to be expected, and would have been out of harmony with the occasion and with the disposition of the apostles' souls that extraordinary evening.⁵³ Faced with such lack of understanding on the part of the disciples, good and devoted though they were, the Master could say only one thing: "It is enough." Really, the dis-

course could not have proceeded farther. The disciples would understand later.

Jesus was never greater than in that hour when He uttered this sad "It is enough." And Christ went out toward the Mount of Olives, and remained on watch alone, a little distance from the sleeping disciples. He remained awake in anguished, ardent prayer, in a surrender of His whole being to His heavenly Father, to whom, a few hours later, He would address the words of the Psalmist: "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

⁵² The announcement of the martyrdom to be undergone by St. Peter was likewise made by Jesus in the form of an allusion that was very delicate but clear. Cf. John 21:18 f.

CHAPTER XIV

The Concept of Divine Justice
in Hebrew Thought

THE biblical account of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah is etiological in character. Popular tradition recalled that at one time there existed, north of the Dead Sea, flourishing cities which were subsequently devoured by fire. When the historical fact became an oft-told tale, certainly not without historical elements, people would ask: "Why did divine justice permit such a punishment to be inflicted?" The answer was that the patriarch Abraham begged the Lord to spare the threatened cities for the sake of the few just men who might be dwelling in them. The plea put into Abraham's mouth by tradition is very audacious: "Thou who judgest all the earth wilt not make this judgment."¹ If some righteous men were living there, even though in small number, could the Eternal allow them to perish along with the wicked? In the account of Sodom and Gomorrah, unlike that contained in the Book of Job,² there is as yet no thought of the possibility of a return to the Lord and of a consequent act of mercy on the part of God; only the plea is made that the just God could not but spare the cities, out of regard for the just. The

conclusion is that good men were not to be found in Pentapolis, and that Pentapolis was destroyed because of the sins of all its inhabitants, in a way that completely vindicates the notion of divine justice: evil begets punishment. This narrative shows us how the problem of theodicy is posed and solved.

This simple, clear, absolute conception of divine justice is reflected in a number of other passages in the Bible. The dominant idea of a whole series of psalms is: "They that trust in the Lord shall be as Mount Sion: he shall not be moved forever."³ Those who trust in the Lord⁴ implore the Lord for help and protection for themselves,⁵ punishment for those who wish them evil,⁶ and deliverance from the hands of enemies and the wicked.⁷ He who has faith in the Lord is the perfect antithesis of him who finds inspiration in vanities.⁸ Lack of faith in salvation through the Lord's help rouses His anger.⁹ The just enjoy the Lord's uninterrupted protection, whereas the proud are punished,¹⁰ and the joy of the wicked passes, to give way to complete desolation.¹¹

Jeremias, the prophet of prayer, curses the man that trusts in man, and blesses the man that trusts in the Lord: such a one shall be like a tree planted by the waters, ever verdant, never failing to bear fruit. The Lord is He who searches the heart, proves the reins, and gives to every

¹ Ps. 124 (123):1.

² The "man who trusts in the Lord" forms a parallel with *hasid*, pious man.

³ Ps. 85:2, 6.

⁴ Ps. 39:15.

⁵ Ps. 21 and 70.

⁶ Ps. 30:7; 36:2 L.

⁷ Ps. 77:21 II.

⁸ Ps. 30:24.

⁹ Ps. 54:24; Ps. 55.

¹ Gen. 18:25.

² Cf. Zolli, *Israele*, pp. 289-300.

man the fruit of his labor.¹² The idea expressed here agrees perfectly with the first psalm: The just man "shall be like a tree which is planted near the running waters. . . . And his leaf shall not fall off. . . . Not so the wicked, not so: but like the dust which the wind driveth from the face of the earth. . . . For the Lord knoweth the way of the just: and the way of the wicked shall perish."

As we see from the greater part of these texts, the lot of the man who trusts in the Lord appears diametrically opposed to that of the evil-doer. Hence the basic feature of Old Testament theodicy is the difference between the destiny of the just man and that of the sinner. The Lord is just: therefore the lot of the good ought to be good, and the lot of the bad ought to be bad. The good, in their turn, are they who trust in the Lord; and people who trust in the Lord cannot but be good. The Lord is represented as an ideal judge, who gives all His support to the good and is ready to chastise the wicked severely. Few are the exceptions to this rule, which may be said to be general, of the theodicy of the Old Testament.

Yet we can easily see how life did not permit any idea of a mechanized divine justice to survive in this conception. From multitudes of good people, struck with misfortune and suffering, the wailing cry goes up: "Why is the light of happiness turned to illuminate the path trodden by the wicked?" And this "why" becomes oppressive and depressive. The centuries-old teaching is like an ancient wall in which life has opened up a breach. It is all well enough to say that the Lord gives good to the good and evil to the evil, but daily experience thrusts forward numerous ex-

¹² Jer. 17:5-10.

amples that stand to prove the opposite. How explain this puzzling way in which the Lord acts?

The agonizing problem gnawing at the tortured soul of Israel finds particular expression in Psalm 124 (125) which, to our mind, depicts the keen longing for the reintegration of the ancient divine justice. This thought, however, does not emerge clearly from the translations and interpretations usually given for the third verse. In most of the ancient and modern translations this verse is rendered as follows: "For the scepter of the wicked shall not remain upon the heritage of the just, that the just may not stretch forth their hands to iniquity." "The scepter of the wicked" is taken to represent the pagan domination, the domination of foreign peoples that weighs on Israel; and "the heritage of the just" is the Holy Land. The Psalmist is thought to be preoccupied with the consideration that the faith of the good may be shaken if the evil tyranny long continues, or that faithless and base Israelites may make a pact with the enemy or learn to follow the iniquities of the oppressors.¹³

In our judgment, nothing of this sort is contained in Psalm 124 (125). The political note is not there at all. The sacred song is poured out by a pious soul that knows and feels the problem of the Old Testament theodicy. The preoccupation weighing on his heart has nothing to do with the political events of the day, with events that are seen in their perspective at a particular period of Israel's life and that pass away. The singer's soul is turned toward

¹³ The various translations and interpretations are discussed in my article, "Il significato di *shebhet* nel Salmo CXXV," *Atti del XIX Congresso internazionale degli Orientalisti* (Roma, 1938).

the eternal, insoluble problem of divine justice. The misunderstanding of the text clearly comes from the meaning which all the exegetes and lexicographers assign to the word *shebhet* in verse 3. This term, which generally means "staff, rod, scepter, branch, tribe," has here, in our view, the meaning of "star"; according to a suggestion proposed by Seidel, the learned Palestinian philologist, it has the same meaning in Numbers 24:17.¹⁴ Rashi explains the Talmudic expression *kokh bha d'shabhet*¹⁵ as follows: "A star that casts lightning-flashes like an arrow from one place to another; in the act of casting its light it is long like a staff, and gives the impression of splitting open the firmament." If *shebhet* has the meaning of "star" in Numbers 24:17, and if in the Talmud it signifies a star (with a staff), a comet, nothing is easier than to admit that it acquires a similar value in Psalm 124 (125). Here it has precisely the meaning of comet; not, however, in the literal sense of a heavenly body, but in the sense often ascribed to such a body, namely, that of lot or fortune.¹⁶

Hence the idea expressed in Psalm 124 (125):3 would be the following: the lot of the wicked will not coincide with that of the just, and therefore the just should not stretch forth their hands to iniquity. If the lot of the wicked is equal to that of the just, the faith which the latter have in justice may be shaken, and they can ask: "Why is the path of the wicked lighted up with happiness?" They can feel the sinner's happiness like a dagger piercing their hearts, from which faith in the divine justice, love of good,

¹⁴ Seidel, *Hagigat lashon*, p. 42. Gressmann, *Der Messias*, p. 323, also translates Num. 24:17b: "A comet (ein Komet) rises up from Israel."

¹⁵ Talmud Ber. 58 B.

¹⁶ The term *mazzal*, which originally meant solar station, a sign of the zodiac, likewise ended up by signifying lot, fortune.

and hope of a just recompense for their deeds sleep away little by little, and in which slowly, almost inadvertently, an inclination to follow the way of the wicked infiltrates.

The singer of Psalm 72 (73) also suffers at the sight of the happiness won by the wicked, those evil men who grow fat, who rejoice without ceasing, who in their pride look down on all, who oppress all men, saying: "How doth God know? And is there knowledge in the Most High?" The seed of envy has already penetrated his heart, he is on the point of abandoning the path of virtue. But at the moment of bitterest inner conflict he enters the sacred halls of God, and there at length understands the future lot of the wicked; he understands that their fortune is passing away and that they will be destroyed by the Lord. There, too, the sacred flame of faith is rekindled in him, he learns to desire nothing but union with the Lord, his love for God becomes a burning, overpowering passion, and he cries out: "For Thee my flesh and my heart hath fainted away: Thou art the God of my heart and the God that is my portion forever. For behold they that go far from Thee shall perish." The sacred poet is happy: the nearness of God makes him happy. The peace reigning in the sanctuary mounts up in his soul, pours into him, gives him calmness, tranquillity, confidence. In his heart every doubt vanishes, every torment ceases. There, within the walls of the sanctuary, the poet is born to a new faith, a staunch faith that will never again waver at the sight of the happiness of the wicked.¹⁷

¹⁷ Löhr, *Alttestamentliche Religions-Geschichte*, p. 126, discerns in this psalm a sign of hope in the future life. Herkenne, *Psalmen*, 249, also interprets it quite otherwise than we do. According to him, the man who is praying sees the wicked growing more discomfited from moment to moment, and, after assisting at their overthrow, recovers faith in the Lord's power. Herkenne comes

But the psychological process which the sacred singer experienced within the sacred walls is not a phenomenon that manifests itself in all, nor does it occur often. Perhaps Psalm 72 (73) is the only one we have which gives us such a vivid account of a soul that is afflicted, oppressed, shaken in faith and reborn to faith, of a soul that descended to the abyss and ascended again in search of the heavenly Father. The masses easily allow themselves to be overcome by distrust and discouragement, and lack the energy to fight and conquer.

For this reason the anxiety of the poet of Psalm 124 (125) is well founded. And he insists on the problem of divine justice: God will not permit the lot of the wicked to coincide with that of the just. If the two lots are to fuse, the good men who suffer oppression could one day say: "But then, why be good? Why follow the ways and the commandments of the Lord? Where is there a reward of the good? Where is the punishment reserved for the wicked? Is not life in clashing contrast with divine justice, with the doctrine of divine justice handed down to us by our fathers? We see that the wicked live a happy, honored life, while the just, the good, undergo humiliations of every kind. So, then, it is a vain thing to serve the Lord."

And actually the people came to precisely such conclusions. In Malachias 2:17 the prophet rebukes the masses

to this explanation by emending the expression, *ad abba el mikdeshe El*, "until I go into the sanctuary of God," so that it reads, *ad ba elem kasherim*, "until the silencing of the wicked has been brought about." We feel unable to accept Herkenne's emendation, since nowhere in the Bible, so far as we know, does the expression *ba elem* signify that someone has been put to silence, nor is the term *kasher*, present participle of the verb *kashor*, to bind, found in the sense of "wicked." Moreover, Herkenne's interpretation, according to which the praying man has rediscovered peace and faith by actually witnessing the ruin of the wicked, only lowers the exalted level to which the poet has raised his piety.

for saying: "Every one that doth evil is good in the sight of the Lord, and such please Him. . . . Where is the God of judgment?" And in 3:14 the Lord, through the prophet's mouth, complains of the harsh words uttered by the masses: "You have said: He laboreth in vain that serveth God, and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinances, and that we have walked sorrowful before the Lord of hosts?" ¹⁸ From the rest of the discourse we learn that the people regard as happy those who work evil, the wicked who have distrusted God and nevertheless remain safe. Ecclesiastes also asks what is the good of the wise man's wisdom and what loss is suffered by the sinner's wickedness: as the one dies, so does the other.

This is why the sacred singer, in Psalm 124 (125), after saying that the Lord surrounds with His protection all who trust in Him, asserts that God will never allow the lot of the sinner to merge with that of the just man, as otherwise the just would readily stretch their hands out to iniquity and would be tempted to give themselves to evil. And in grieving accents the Psalmist prays to the Lord: "Do good to those that are good and to the upright of heart, and let the lot of those that walk by circuitous routes merge with the lot of those that work iniquity." In a certain way, the fear of God among the multitudes will be promoted if the Lord, in assigning to men their portions, will bring to fulfillment the ancient formula: good to the good and evil to the evil. The Psalmist still hopes to obtain by his prayer that the Lord will satisfy the desire of the masses, and that He will show Himself to be that ideal judge dreamed of by the people.

¹⁸ According to Ditt, this order of ideas is reflected in Psalm 4; see *Biblica*, XVI (1935), 330-38.

In a more solemn and, we may say, more dramatic form, the subject of biblical theodicy is summarized in the Book of Job.

The Book of Job deals with the following concepts. God is the almighty Creator of the universe, and consequently also of man. Therefore man must have fear of God, he must be "God-fearing," he must avoid evil. One's fear of God is made known according to a most rigid pattern of social justice. Nature causes men to be born and to die according to certain rules that are invariably the same, and hence everyone has the duty of treating others with a cordially human sympathy. Fear of God is expressed by a profound reverence for God. As man may have failed, even though unconsciously, in reverence toward God, he has the obligation of offering sacrifices to God or of redeeming his own person by some other adequate means. Thus justice requires. God also is just, and therefore, as Creator of man and Custodian of man's fortunes, He will reward the good and punish the wicked. Were God to reverse the roles and assign a prosperous life to the wicked and sufferings to the good, He would be unjust. A man who has acted unjustly can be haled before a judge. But can God? And if God were to appear before the mistreated just man who calls on Him, what could He, the Almighty, say to the man who, like a blade of grass, grows up in the morning and withers away in the evening? God would say to him: "Yes, suffering man, you are right, you are just: because in the midst of grievously bitter sufferings you have called on Me, and on Me alone. You have bewailed your lot with great sincerity; even in the midst of indescribable woes, you have kept your fear of Me. I, the almighty

Creator, will heal your wounds, and life shall again spring up around you."

If we prescind from every narrative element, from every artistic embellishment, and from all philosophical speculation, we may say that the storehouse of ideas in the Book of Job is such as we have briefly outlined.

But now a question arises. In the eyes of mortal man, of that weak being endowed with an intelligence that is ever limited in spite of its power, has God acted justly? And does the recognition of man's inferiority before the Lord of the universe succeed in solving the problem of divine justice?

During the prolonged conversations, Job's friends lodge accusations against the great sufferer because the starting point of their reasoning is the ancient biblical conception of divine justice: "He who sins, suffers; he who suffers, has sinned." To their minds, therefore, Job suffers because he has sinned. For his part Job affirms, in the midst of most acute sufferings, that he is innocent. And still in the midst of most acute sufferings, he exclaims: "Even if God kills me, I hope in Him." Job's meaning seems to be: "I suffer, trusting in Thee; and Thou, Lord, hast abandoned me." At the end, God sides with the just Job, and pardons the latter's accusers, his so-called "friends," only through the intercession of Job himself.

But with all this, have the sufferings of the martyr been justified? No. From the human point of view, Job alone is just: Job who blesses the Lord even after the most atrocious blows have been rained on him, Job who stretches out his numbed and wounded arms to receive ever new sufferings from God's hand, who is ready to suffer provided God

will show Himself to be a just God, and who, not wishing to be condemned in contumacy, as we should say today, asks only to be shown by God the list of the faults committed, the "why" of his suffering. The book draws to a close and ends; but the great "why" remains like a burning, bleeding wound, never healing up.

This is the deep tragedy narrated in the biblical book of Job and in the great book of life.

Satan's intrigues ¹⁹ are not an answer to the problem of divine justice. The "prologue in heaven," according to Goethe's correct interpretation, is but a literary expedient.

Has the great, tremendous "why" of the sufferings of God's just servant never been further investigated? Has the restless mind of Israel been content with the glory of having raised the problem without ever turning back to the subject? Was the aim merely to carve the figure of a biblical Laocoön as an artistic expression of supreme suffering, or does Job represent a religious problem, that is, a problem that is at once human and divine? Has no reply been given to the question, or even, has no reply been attempted?

At first sight, it seems we ought to answer all these questions with a "No." Certain psalms, written in the spirit of the Book of Job, do no more than repeat particular motives drawn from the book itself. Jeremias also, in some pages of unsurpassable beauty, inquires into the reason for his suffering, but his reflections are mostly a releasing of his tortured feelings. The prophet certainly has no intention

¹⁹ In Zach 3:1-3, the high priest, Jesus, in consequence of Satan's attacks, comes forward as a sinner in penitential garb.

of treating the grave problem of divine justice. Yet we believe that the enigma, although not solved, because it is incapable of solution by mere reasoning, comes up for consideration again in the history of man. Where? When? In the mission, in the teaching, in the passion of Jesus Christ, presented in the guise of the Servant of God in the Book of Isaias.

Who is the "Servant of God" in Isaias? The figure as exhibited to us in the various poems of the Book of Isaias is not monolithic, and therefore is open to a great variety of interpretations.

Gressmann finds in the chapters treating of the Servant an echo of the lamentations for King Josias, who fell fighting valiantly in the war against the Egyptian king, Neco. But neither the historical figure of King Josias nor that of King Ezechias discloses anything that could call to mind the Servant. Again, we are not convinced by the opinion of certain authors, such as Gunkel, who see in the Servant the prophet himself: for in general the prophets when speaking of the humiliations and outrages they are subjected to, speak in the first person and in a clear manner. Rabbinic tradition, with which Origen is also associated, sees in the Servant the figure of the derided and scorned people of Israel. For Lods, likewise, the Servant personifies the pathetic idea of the martyr nation, suffering for the good of the world.²⁰

Nevertheless the supposition is quite unsound, for a number of reasons, among them the fact that in the Servant a glimpse is caught, through the community (Israel) of a particular individual, who is either historical or eschatological. When we read in Isaias 44:21 f., "Remember

²⁰ *Les prophètes d'Israël et les débuts du judaïsme*, p. 278.

these things, O Jacob and Israel, for thou art My servant. I have formed thee . . . forget Me not. . . . Return to Me, for I have redeemed thee," we have to declare openly that the servant of God is the people of Israel. But how can Isaias 45:9 f. refer to the people? "Woe to him that gainsayeth his Maker, a sherd of the earthen pots. Woe to him that saith to his father: Why begettest thou?" Isaias 49:7 is a splendid representation of the people as servant of God: "Thus saith the Lord, the redeemer of Israel, His Holy One, to the soul that is despised, to the nation that is abhorred, to the servant of rulers: Kings shall see, and princes shall rise up and adore for the Lord's sake, because He is faithful, and for the Holy One of Israel, who hath chosen thee."

But the deeply moving description in Isaias 50:4-10 delineates a noble and heroic individual, his head adorned with the crown of martyrdom: "The Lord hath given me a learned tongue, that I should know how to uphold by word him that is weary. . . . The Lord God hath opened my ear, and I do not resist: I have not gone back. I have given my body to the strikers, and my cheeks to them that plucked them: I have not turned away my face from them that rebuked me and spit upon me. The Lord God is my helper, therefore am I not confounded: therefore have I set my face as a most hard rock, and I know that I shall not be confounded. He is near that justifieth me, who will contend with me? Let us stand together, who is my adversary? Let him come near to me. Behold the Lord God is my helper: who is he that shall condemn me? Lo, they shall all be destroyed as a garment, the moth shall eat them up. Who is there among you that feareth the Lord, that heareth the voice of His servant, that hath walked in dark-

ness, and hath no light? Let him hope in the name of the Lord, and lean upon his God." ²¹ Isaias, chapter 53, mentions the '*ish makk'obhoth*, the man of sorrows, and it is the community of Israel that says about him, the individual person, the hero: "But he was wounded for our iniquities, he was bruised for our sins; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his bruises we are healed."

The speaker is the community of Israel. But he, the derided, the wounded one, who has known how to shoulder and carry the burden of the sins of all—who is he?

When the figure of the Servant is compared with that of Job, similarities and dissimilarities emerge at the same time. Once the figure of Job, the great sufferer, the figure born in the meditative Semitic soul, had entered into Israel's spirituality, it remained there forever. Every era in the history of Israel saw Job in the light of its own time. According to Talmudic tradition, some thought he lived during the age of the patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; others thought he was born in the years in which Israel went down to Egypt, and died during the period of the exile; some held that he was a contemporary of Moses; others, that he lived at the time of the Judges, or of David, or of Solomon, or of Assuerus; others regard him as one of the repatriates returning from the Babylonian exile.

In his own ancient homeland—according to Torczyner the figure of Job is a creation of the Edomite people—Job was considered to be an '*oyebh*', that is, a man who grieves

²¹ The Servant of God, who promotes the glory of God in the final triumph after winning, during his earthly pilgrimage, the obedience and penitence of the people, tightens the bond between the Lord and Israel, as Aldo Ferrabino well observes in his excellent work, *L'Italia Romana* (Milan: Mondadori, 1934), p. 526.

at being treated by God like an enemy,²² or an *'ayyabh*, a man converted to God. The biblical Job has more fear of God than love of God. He himself speaks frequently of fear of the Almighty, and never alludes to the fundamental idea of the Torah: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with thy whole heart and with thy whole soul and with thy whole strength." The Torah says, "Thou shalt fear the Lord" only when enacting laws; the relation between man and God is generally characterized by love.

But not for Job. Job does not even beg for divine pardon. He appeals only to divine justice. He says: "Thou art so powerful (not 'merciful') and Thou dost engage in persecuting me, who am so weak. Even had I sinned, what harm would I have done to Thee, who art infinitely great?" He discerns God in nature, and turns toward Him to inquire into the reason for the sufferings of the innocent. "There, in nature," says Job, "I see Thee, Lord, but where is Thy justice? Explain to me Thy workings as Master of man's lot." The biblical Job has not embraced God in a transport of love, at a moment of mystical rapture, at a moment, that is, of divine self-revelation, when man is oblivious of himself and disengages himself from all that is of earth to merge with God in a single unity. Job remains apart and says: "Here are my works, O Lord, and here are my woes. And Thy justice, where is it?"

The evil overwhelming him is too terrible. He, *iyyobh*, the man devoted to God, the just and pious man, the defender of widows and orphans, helper of all the weak, the honored and honorable father of a family, and the scrupulous observer of sacrificial rites, is struck down by repulsive diseases as though he were an *'oyebh*, an enemy

²² Job 13:24; 19:6.

and blasphemer of God, a transgressor of ritual precepts.²³ Such a reversal of lots could not fail to disquiet the religious conscience of Job and his friends. This is the incentive for the deep and vivacious discussion about divine justice. The idea of applying tests to ascertain whether a particular man is really struck by God is widely diffused throughout biblical and post-biblical literature; but rarely has it given rise to a work of art—of art rather than of faith—of such great merit.²⁴

In spite of tremendous differences, the Servant of God in Isaias undoubtedly calls to mind, in some points, the figure of Job. There are even certain stylistic resemblances. The two personalities are similar, but at the same time immensely dissimilar.

Both are true friends of the weak, and strenuous upholders of justice. In Isaias 42:1-4 we read: "Behold My servant . . . he shall bring forth judgment to the nations. . . . The bruised reed he shall not break. . . . He shall not be sad nor troublesome till he set judgment in the earth." Job recalls: "I had delivered the poor man that cried out, and the fatherless that had no helper. The blessing of him that was ready to perish came upon me, and I comforted the heart of the widow. I was clad with justice, and I clothed myself with my judgment as with a robe and a diadem. I was an eye to the blind and a foot to the lame. I was the father of the poor, and the cause which I knew not I searched out most diligently. I broke the jaws of the wicked man, and out of his teeth I took away the prey."

²³ In the beliefs of the Syrians, transgressors of ritual precepts are afflicted with an inflammation of the whole body, which breaks out in wounds and swellings.

²⁴ Cf. Gustav Hölscher, *Das Buch Hiob*, in O. Eissfeldt (ed.), *Handbuch zum A. T.* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1937), p. 3.

(Job 29:12-17). Both are sorrowful, broken by disease,²⁴ humiliated, derided, and, in spite of all, trustful.

But Job, when he is mocked, recalls with all the louder lamentation the time when even princes became silent when he appeared and awaited his advice, whereas the Servant of God does not complain of anything. The great prestige that is past for Job, still awaits the Servant, and his triumph is yet to come. Job turns back to his ancient glory; with regret for the past he pleads, in a way, for its return. The Servant of God, will, indeed, one day receive the homage of sovereigns and princes,²⁵ but he asks for nothing but suffering. Job wails that he is covered with the spittle of base men²⁶ and with degrading blows;²⁷ the Servant of God voluntarily submits to the same contempt.²⁸ He is the sheep that is silent before the shearers and he does "not open his mouth"; he suffered and "he opened not his mouth."²⁹ But Job "opened his mouth and cursed his day."³⁰ He is not able to keep his mouth closed;³¹ he cries out with a loud voice that for him there is no justice.³² Job gives vent, in impassioned outpourings, to his anguish at being subjected to such sufferings; the Servant of God remains silent. He sanctifies pain with silence and refuses to speak. But if he were to speak he would certainly say something similar to what we read in Matthew 5:39 f.: "I say to you not to resist evil; but if one strike thee on thy right cheek, turn to him also the other;

²⁴ Isa. 52:14.

²⁵ Isa. 49:7.

²⁶ Job 30:10.

²⁷ Job 16:11.

²⁸ Isa. 50:6.

²⁹ Isa. 53:7.

³⁰ Job 3:1.

³¹ Job 7:11.

³² Job 19:6 L.

and if a man will contend with thee in judgment and take away thy coat, let go thy cloak also unto him." Job sees in the Lord his great adversary in his terrible conflict with God Himself; the Servant sees in God, who has laid on him the burden of suffering for others, his powerful aid and his great protector against opponents. Job was "simple and upright and fearing God"³³ in the spirit of Ezechiel, that is, for his own salvation; the Servant of God is pure and great and suffering to cleanse others of their sins. His will is made identical with that of God. Thus the divine work is fully justified. Equilibrium is restored.

Job does not wish to suffer; he suffers because he cannot escape his sufferings. He is a victim by necessity. The Servant of God, who is Jesus Christ, suffers because He wishes to suffer in order to blot out the sins of others. Job submits to a destiny. The Servant of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, undertakes the act of a voluntary, expiatory sacrifice. And in Him it is God who offers Himself and suffers.

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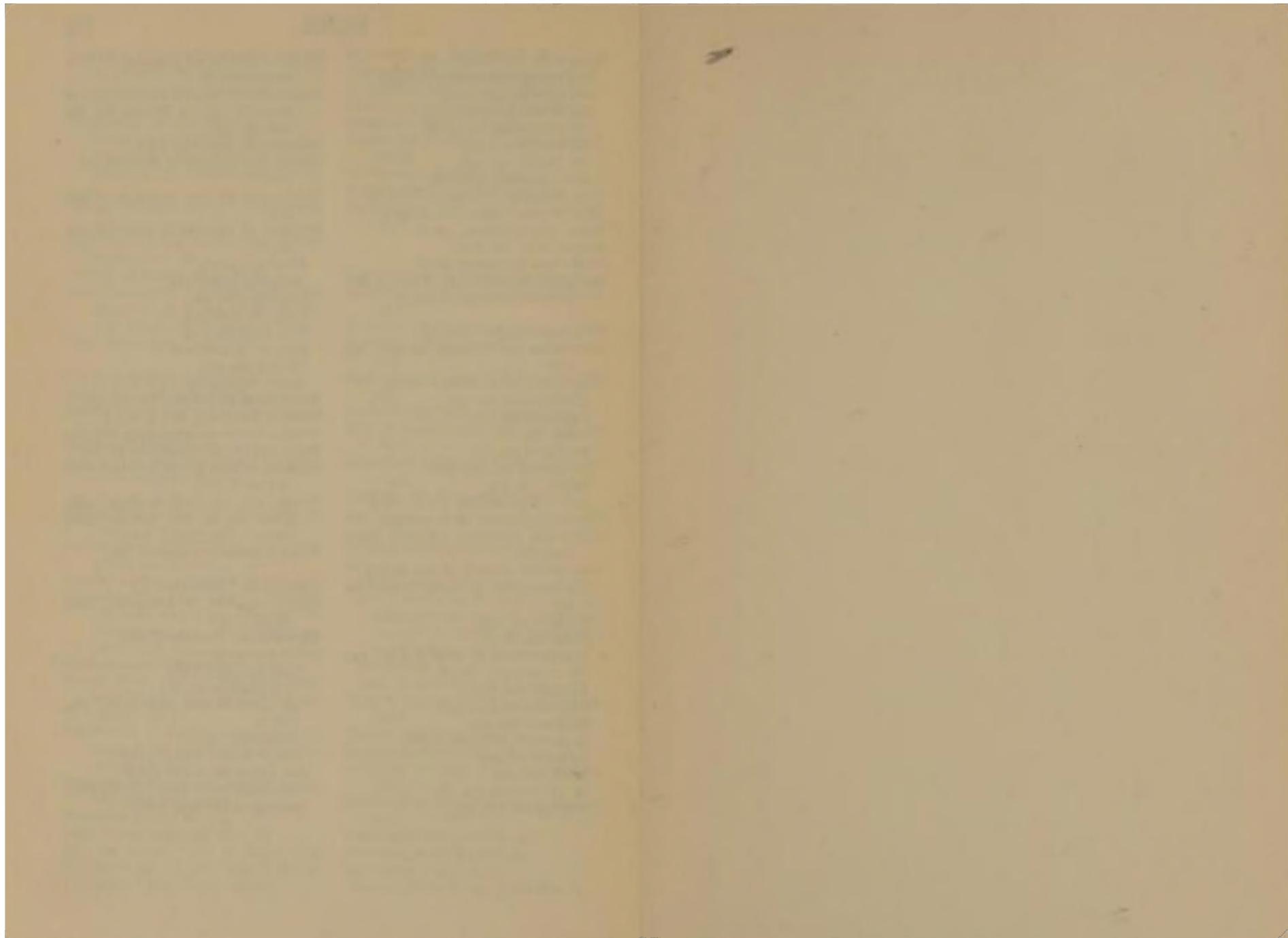
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